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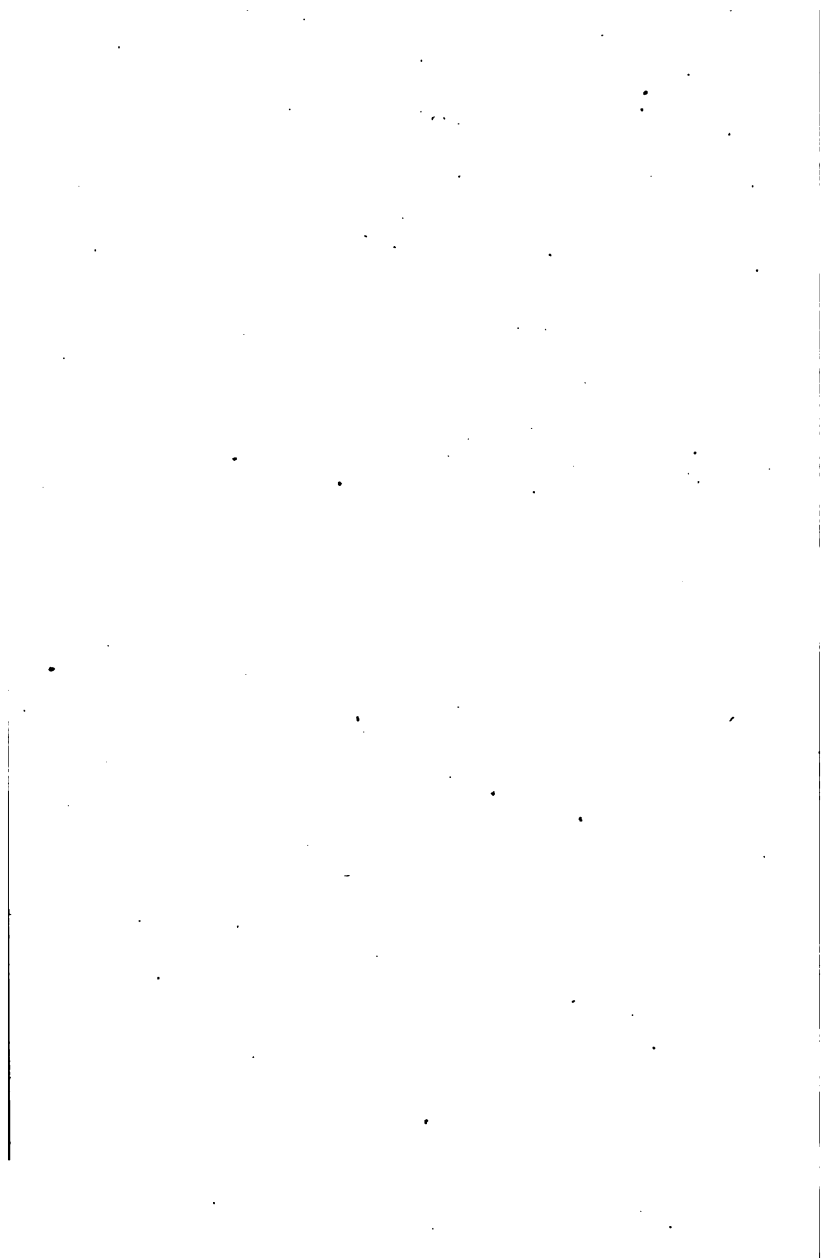
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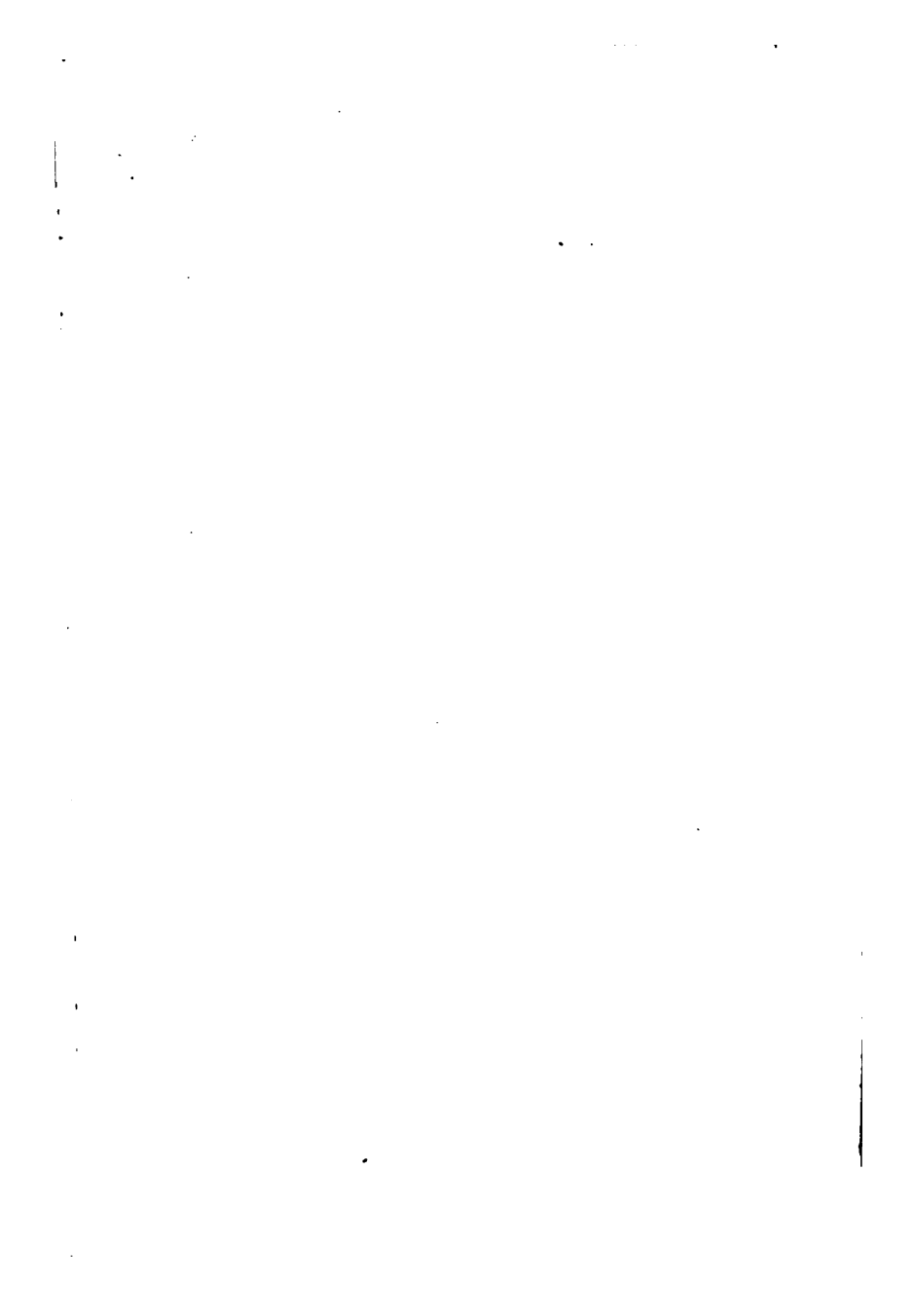
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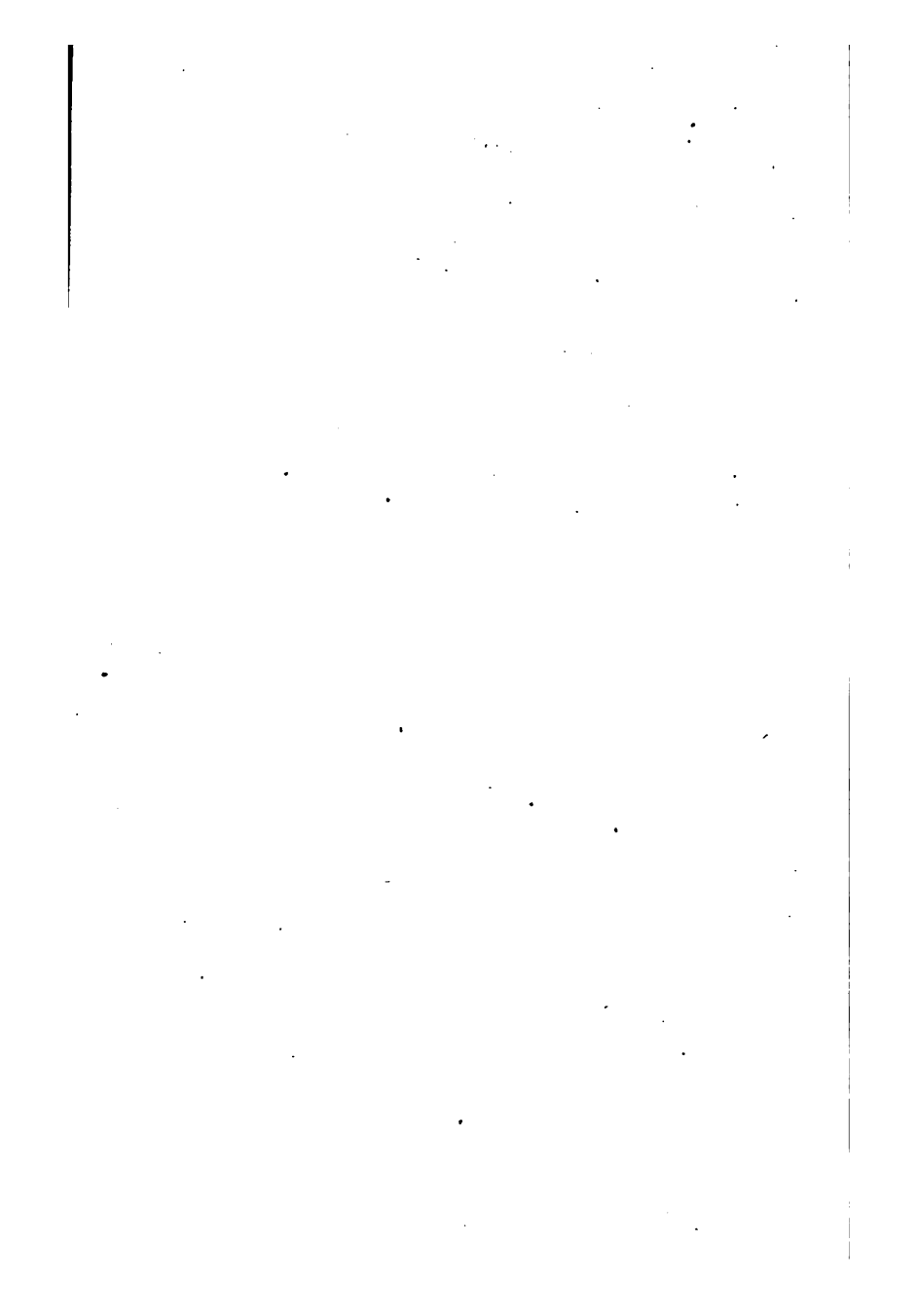
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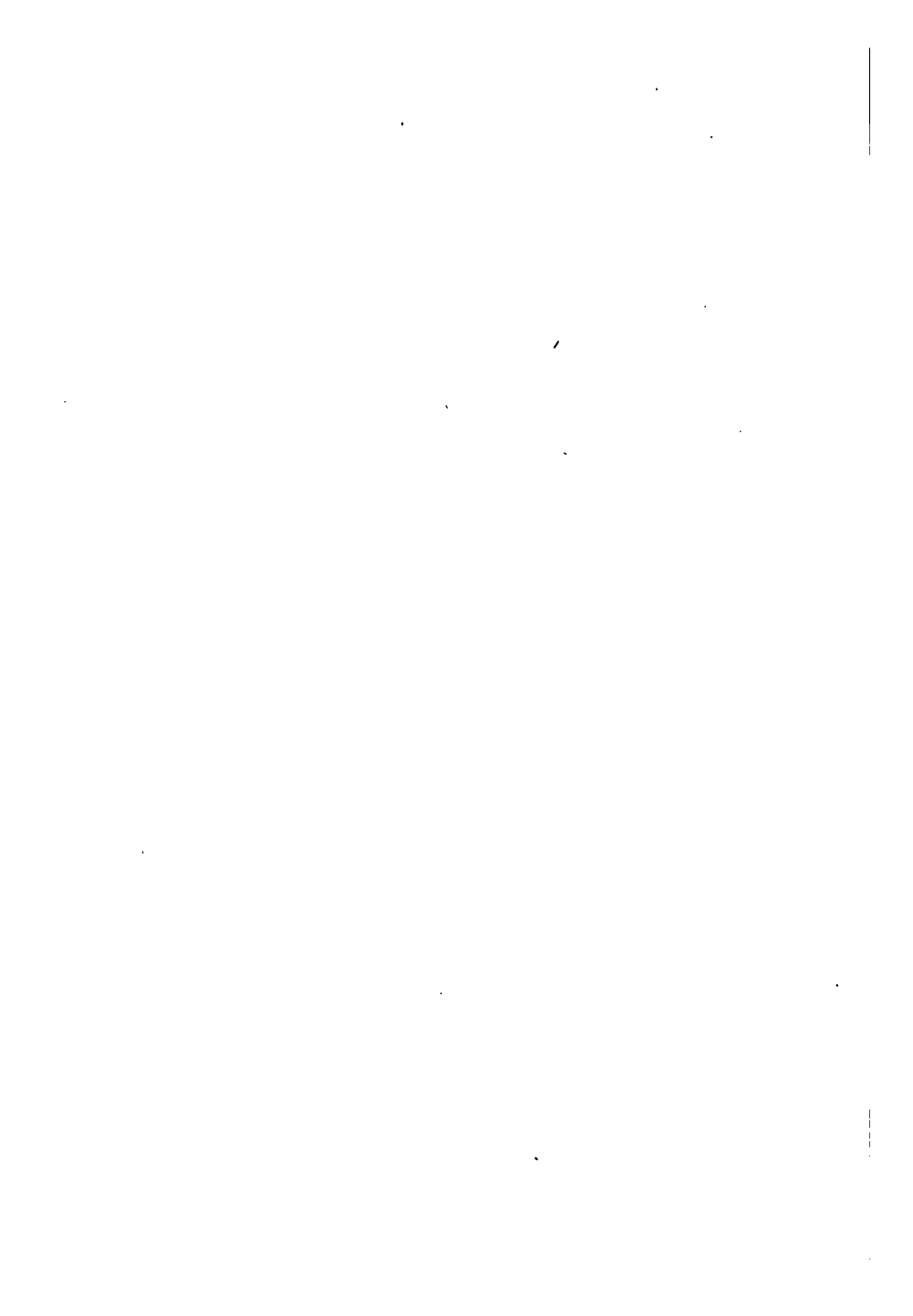




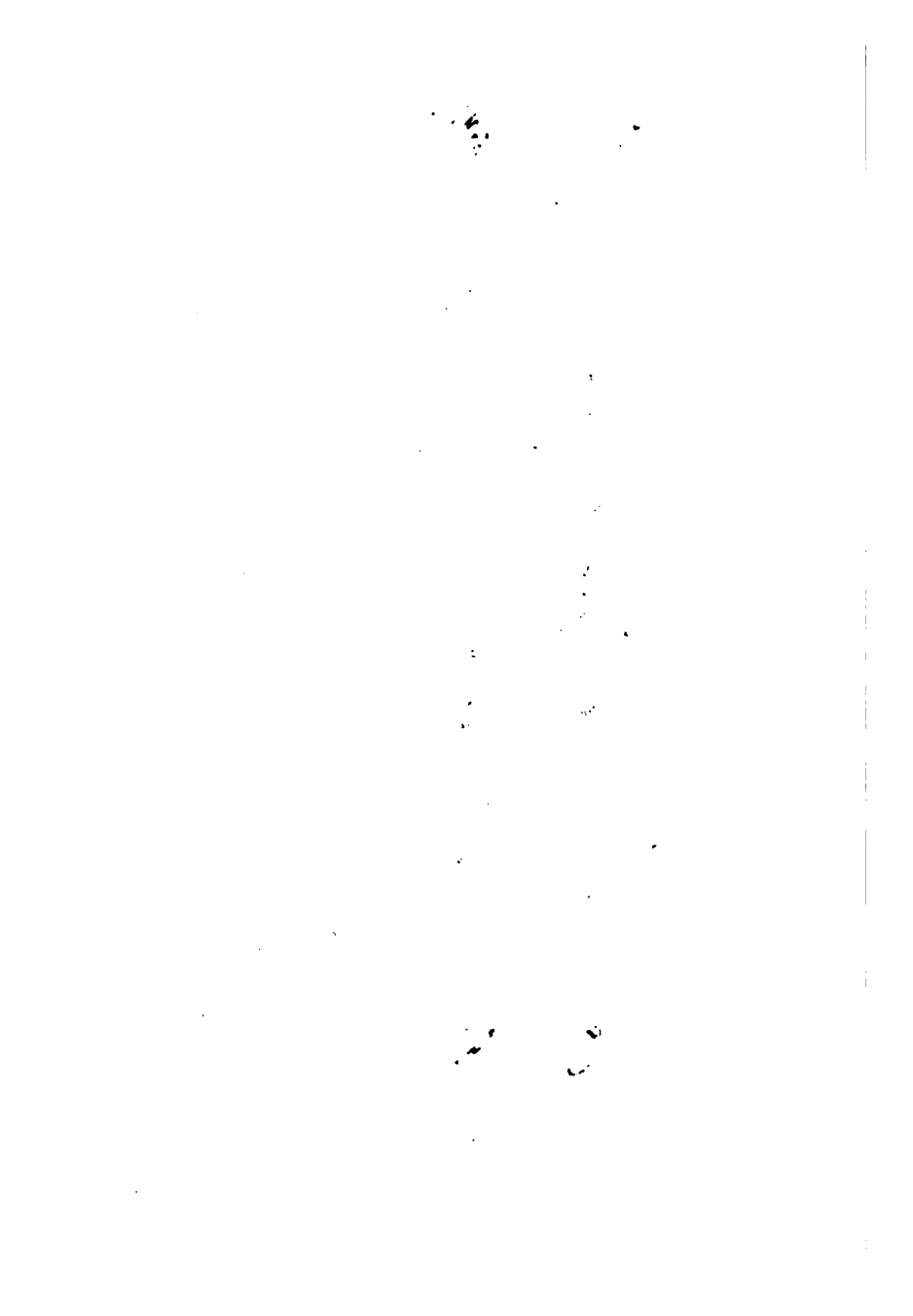




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OIL FOR CREAKING HINGES.



OIL FOR CREAKING HINGES;

OR,

HELP AND COMFORT FOR HARD TIMES.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "TOILING IN ROWING," "A MESSAGE," *Etc.*

With Introduction

BY THE

REV. C. D. BELL, M.A.,

RECTOR OF CHELTENHAM, AND HON. CANON OF CARLISLE.

"Live for the present! Work to-day,
Its duties cannot brook delay;
To-morrow will not do,—the chime
Rings out the knell of passing time:
We reap but as we sow."



London:

WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,

HOLLES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE;

AND AVE MARIA LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1875.

141. m. 299.

INTRODUCTION.



THE Author of the present little book is already favourably known as a writer. "Toiling in Rowing" is the title of a volume of a similar character, and written with a similar object. It has been read with pleasure and profit by many. These are just the books for mothers' meetings and parochial libraries, and they will be found helpful by those who wish to promote a healthy tone of reading amongst the poor, while they will be perused with pleasure by the more cultivated. Every one laments the trash, and worse than trash, that is circulated because of its cheapness, amongst our working men, by means of penny journals and magazines, containing stories and articles often imbued with infidelity, and often tainted with sentiments that

hurt the mind and soil the imagination. A debt of gratitude is due to all who attempt to counteract the evil done by such a class of literature, and who endeavour to provide reading which will raise while it instructs the mind, and interest while it elevates the imagination.

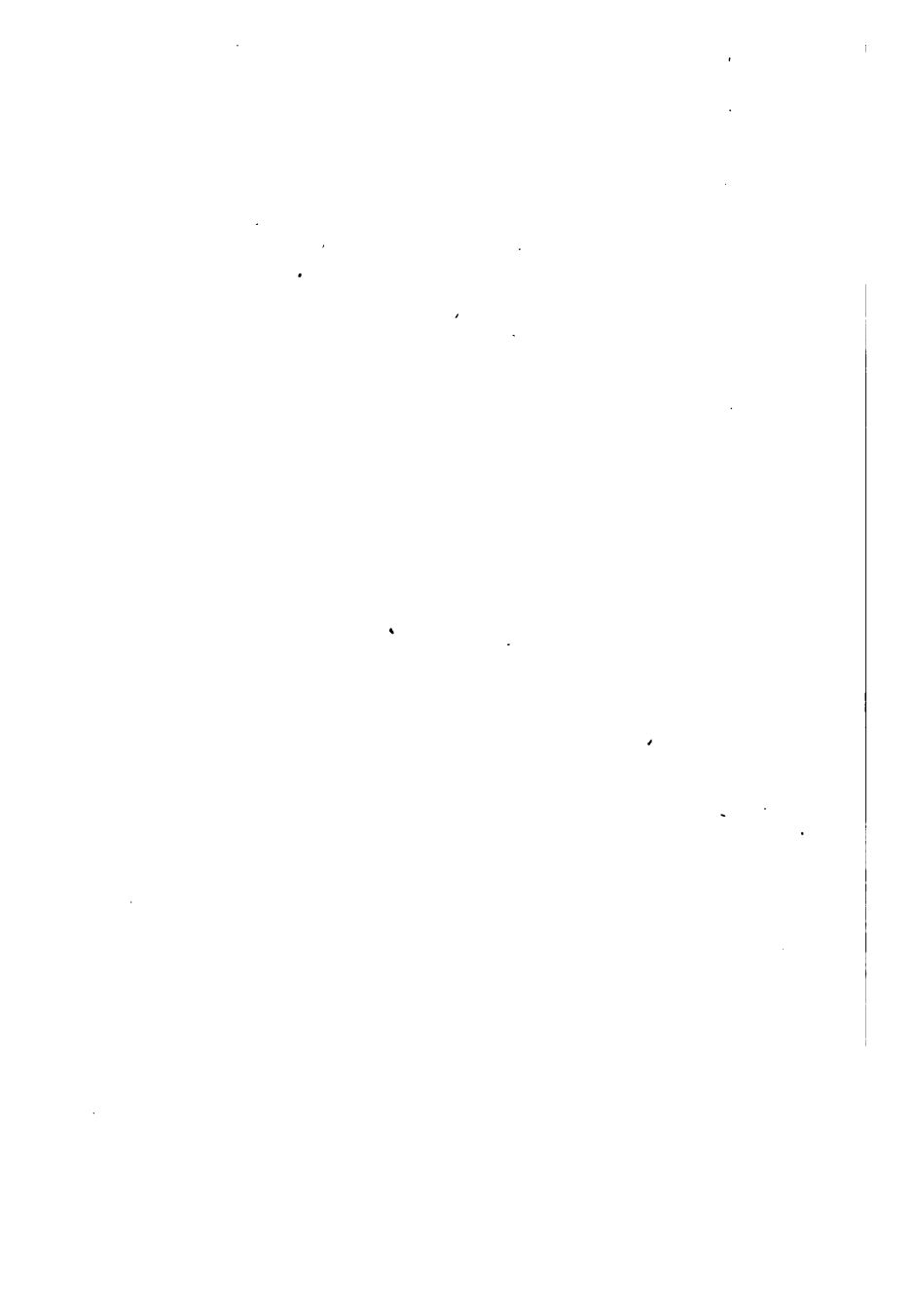
It has been the aim of the Author of "Oil for Creaking Hinges," not only to do this, but something more. She aims at the highest teaching of all, and leads the thoughts to the truest of all faith, the highest of all love, the purest of all hope. To show the reader where real peace is to be found, and how solid happiness is to be secured,—how the world may be used and not abused, and how heaven may stretch before the eye in unfading brightness,—has been the main object with the writer in the pages that follow; and as she does this, the good old beaten paths trodden by those who have run the race with patience, and finished the course, are followed without any deviation, any turning aside to the right hand or to the left. Unseduced by any of the novelties that abound in the present day, the Author "pursues the even tenor of her way." She seeks to introduce no new chords into the old

harmonies of redemption. She feels that any such attempt would only introduce a discord into the Divine song, and mar the sweet melody of the Gospel of peace. Salvation through grace, by faith in God's only Son, and man's only Saviour; regeneration by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; an ever progressive sanctification, through the constraining power of the Spirit; is the Scriptural teaching that runs like a thread of gold through the whole book.

It is with pleasure, at the Author's wish, that I write these few lines as an introduction to a little work which is commended to the blessing of Him who is pleased with the feeblest attempt to serve Him, and who can use the weakest instrument to promote His glory and the salvation of sinners.

CHARLES D. BELL.

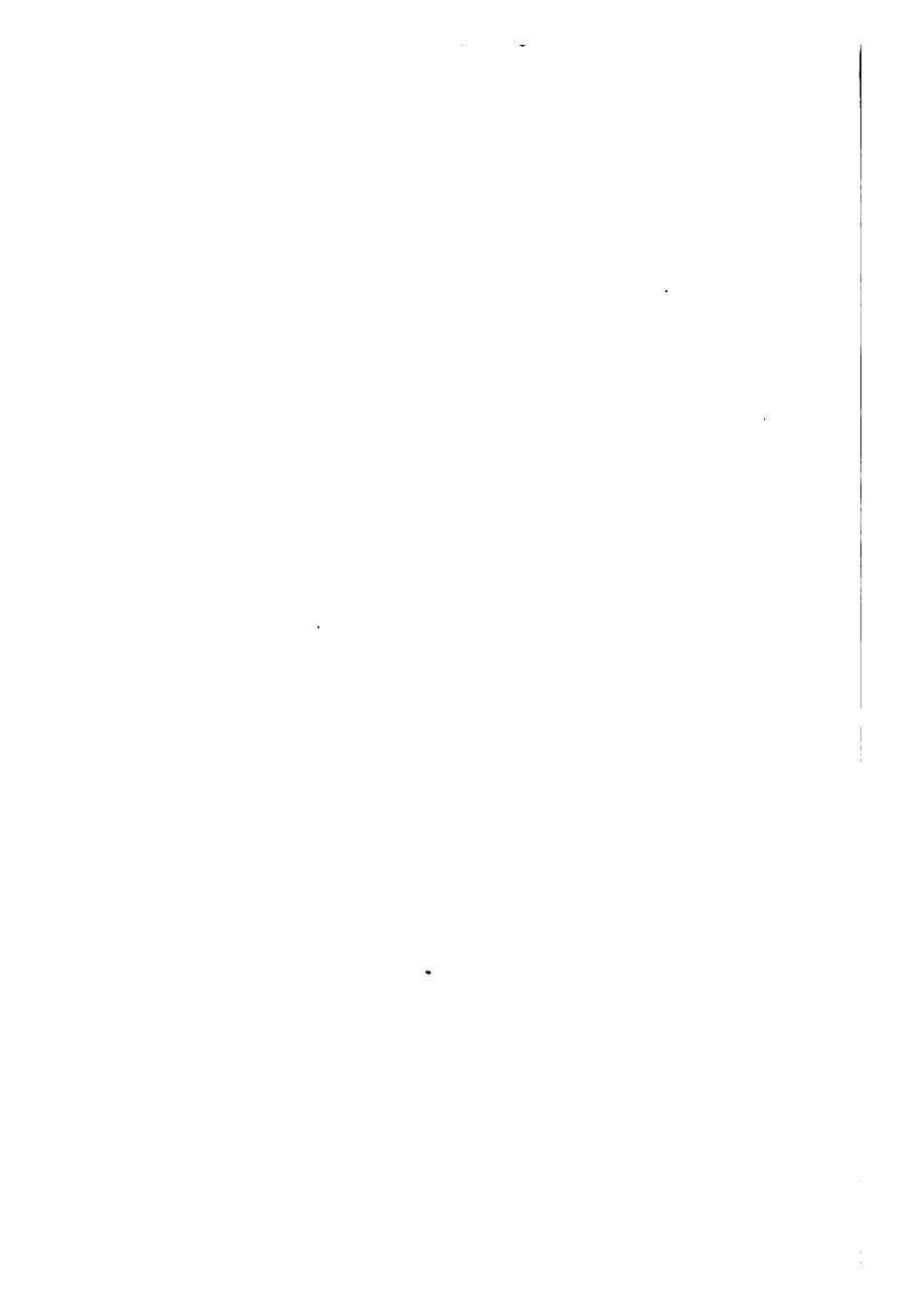
*The Rectory,
Cheltenham.*



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OIL FOR CREAKING HINGES.

I.

TAKING UP THE THREAD.

“Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.”

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Many things have happened since I last wrote to you: happened to you,—happened to me,—happened to England,—happened to Europe,—happened to the world. We are all much nearer the end of time for ourselves,—the end of this state of things for us all. And are we certainly nearer heaven,—certainly nearer happiness: “looking for and hasting unto the day of Christ!”

As I look around I see many things to make me anxious and sorrowful, and many things to make me glad. So I will even sit down for a little more converse with you, and my first greeting shall be a simple question: “Are you happy, my friends?”

Joy and sorrow, health and sickness, have been

ours by turns: and how have we learnt the lessons our Divine Teacher has put before us? "He doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men;" but afflicts us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." Oh, wondrous thought! Yet some of us think it very hard when we are called on to suffer. I grant you it *is* hard for the natural man, who does not know the love in the heart of God towards us,—who does not see the needs be, and frets against the discipline, instead of turning to the Lord and kissing the hand that smites.

I was out on my rounds one day, when I was told there was sorrow in a house I knew. I went in, and found the poor mother broken-hearted at the sudden and shocking death, by burning, of a little girl of four or five. Her pinafore had caught fire: there was, perhaps, a little want of presence of mind, and the mischief was done in a few minutes. The fire had not touched the face, and the little form lay very placid as the father took me to see it. The mother comforted herself that the little one loved to sing at home the hymns learned at the Infant School, and this gave me the opportunity for pleading with them to give their hearts to the Lord, that if death should come to them so suddenly they might be ready. Did they? It is not for me to judge them, but I fear their own hearts would condemn them in this matter.

I went but a little further, and found sorrow in another home. The baby of about ten months old

had pulled some scalding coffee over it, and the little life was soon gasped out from the shock and pain. There was another prattling child; but the mother found it very hard to part with her baby, even though Jesus the Good Shepherd had taken it to His care, from the evil to come; and her tears flowed fast as we prayed that good might come out of the sorrow, and that the father might heed the warning voice, and give up the drink to which he was just a little tempted to give way. The strong man bowed his head to the stroke, and meant to do differently; but when the edge of the sorrow wore away, I fear the good resolutions were let slip. Oh, what a hold sin has on us! How hard do we find it to yield ourselves to the service of God.

I went but a little farther again, and I heard that there had been an accident in the works, and that a strong man was laid a corpse in a moment.

The three funerals met in the same churchyard on the following Sunday afternoon; and surely the warning was uttered loudly enough: "Prepare to meet thy God!" So I pause to wonder who of my former friends will read these words, as I remember that many may have, must have, passed beyond the reach of my voice and pen.

"Plunged into a world unknown,"

Their doom is already fixed,—

"Fixed in the everlasting state."

One I know went down in the horror of the wreck of the ill-fated Northfleet. A handsome lad he was, and I pitied him always so much, as I knew his home was very wretched, owing to the drink and mismanagement, and he often looked so white and half-starved. I did not know quite so much of him as of some of you, but I know he had heard the glad tidings of a gracious Saviour's love and work of reconciliation, and that he had been invited oftentimes to prove for himself the truth of the good news. I had lost sight of him for some time, and then I was shocked to hear that he had been lost on that fatal night. There was a Bible lying for him at the clergyman's, with his name written in it, that he had not taken the trouble to fetch. But if he was one of those who listened to and was touched by the exhortations of the mission preacher in the Thames, he may have cried out, with the dying thief on the cross, "Lord, remember me!" and even as the surging waters closed over his head, may have been sustained by the thought which cheered the dying sailor who had been enabled to trust himself to a mighty Saviour,—"*The plank bears.*"

The death of another for whom I was much interested, and of whom I had not heard for some time, was thus mentioned to me in a letter by a Scripture-reader: "As he was wheeling a barrow on a plank across the shaft, he slipped, and fell to the bottom. Poor T——: I spoke to him, in company with others, about soul matters, the last Sabbath he spent on earth.

I also saw his poor body after death, sadly mutilated. I had only been here a few days when his death occurred, but from what I could gather respecting him, I found that he had been often reproved by accidents (as men term them), and often by yourself and others; yet he hardened his neck, and so the terrible result followed in reference to his body: I would that I could say it was otherwise with his soul." So often he had resolved to do well; had done better for a time,—had determined to live differently: and here was the end! It cut me to the heart.

Turn we to more comforting thoughts. In speaking of the death of anyone the people in the north say, "He's away;" and a blessed thing it is when we can say our friends have heard the heavenly call, and are away, to be with the Master they loved and served on earth. A message was brought me that a poor man who had long been considered in a consumption was much worse, and they thought he was fast nearing his long home. I had never been quite satisfied that he had the secret of true happiness, so I was very anxious to know how he felt in the immediate prospect of death; but it was quite impossible at the time that I could see him myself. I was, therefore, so very thankful to hear from himself, through a lady who visited him constantly, that though grieved to leave his wife to struggle on with a young family, he could trust them to the Lord's gracious care, and that for himself he had no fear, as he knew his sins were pardoned for Christ's sake.

Blessed awakening indeed for him, on passing in the cold grey of a winter's morning from a poor forlorn room and the weariness of a suffering body, to find himself in a home of joy and beauty, in the presence of the Lord of light!

Solomon says, "As the tree falleth so it shall lie;" and the truth is known to us, and the truth he would have us learn from it too. When once the tree is uprooted and down there is no hope of raising it to life again. Majestically it may have swayed to the mighty wind, or its little boughs and leaves been wooed to make sweet music by the whispering breeze; but once the stroke of the axe laid to the root has done its work it lies prostrate and immovable. On the slope of a pretty dell, where I spent hours of the summer day, lay such a parable in an enormous elm, looking in the gloaming like some huge antediluvian monster stretching forth its giant arms. We easily see the application. Life is the time for making sure of heaven: life is the time given us for determining the question which way it shall lie. Whether it is to be cast into the fire to be burned, or to be used for a pillar in the temple of our God. Whether it shall lie toward the north whence cometh destruction, or toward the south whence come the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Whether we are to be "safe in the arms of Jesus," or cast out into outer darkness. Dear friends, if you have not yet determined the question I pray you *delay no longer*.

“As the tree falleth so it shall lie:” but while I am writing to you it is only *falling*; because though the axe is laid to the root, the final stroke has not yet been given; because though the fiat may be going forth, “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?” the pleading voice is heard, “Let it alone this year also;” because while there is time we yet may determine which way it shall lie. We had a magnificent magnolia which took kindly to our soil, and in the course of a few years climbed nearly to the top of our house, delighting everyone with its fresh satin-like leaves, and in the time of flowering with its lovely lemon-shaped and scented pure white blossoms. But one terribly sharp winter our poor tree was struck by the piercing wind and biting frost,—struck for death, as it appeared; and many were the consultations as to whether there was any chance of saving it. At first a few of the worst branches were lopped, in the vain hope that it would suffice. It was no use. The only thing to be done was the desperate remedy of cutting it down to the root: if that were sound it might put forth some new shoots,—though it was a forlorn hope. This was done; and, to our satisfaction, in the early spring we saw the proof of life in the tender green shoots. And now after the lapse of several years our magnolia is again a flourishing tree. Is our magnolia a parable of any of your lives? “Ye did run well; who did hinder you?” The blast of temptation and the frost of affliction seem to have chilled the life

from your religion: the sap runs slowly; the tree of profession is dying down. Happy for you if the great Husbandman takes the case in hand, and by judicious treatment, such as He only knows how to apply,—by pruning and purging, restores the circulation and enables you to be something more than a cumberer of the ground. But remember we must be *rooted in Christ* or there will be no recovery. There is no life but that we draw from Him: unless we abide in Him we can do nothing.

Some I know have gone far off across the sea, taking with them the sense of their Saviour's presence, and finding Him as near in the voyage across the waste of waters and in that strange land as in England. Of them I thought when on my first Sunday in a country home, the clergyman gave out as his text Ezek. xi. 16: "I will be to them a little sanctuary in all places whither I have driven them." Words first spoken to God's ancient people, the Jews; but coming with comforting power to how many hearts since! As to my own faithless heart, that morning worshipping alone among strangers, they were the very cordial I needed.

"A little sanctuary,"—a holy place of refuge. It was a custom in old times, if danger threatened, to flee for refuge to the churches of the monasteries, and Westminster Abbey has often been so used. The queenly widow of our King Edward IV. took sanctuary (as it was called) there with her children; when in those troublous days she feared the power

of the uncle of her children. In older times still we read of men fleeing to the temple of the Lord, and laying hold of the horns of the altar for safety.

“A little sanctuary,”—a holy place of refuge. If we only *lived* there, how smoothly the world would go for us! If we *all* only realized that we *might live* there, what a comfort it would be to some of the weary hearts that are tossing and fretting, exposed shelterless to the storm of life.

I am very often told, “Ah, it’s all very fine for you to talk about religion; you have nothing else to do. Religion is all very well for the rich, but we who have to work for our daily bread haven’t any time for it; we have so many troubles, and such a fight sometimes through them, that we can’t think about it, and we haven’t any time for going to church or reading our Bibles.”

Now I might take objection to the idea that we *have nothing else to do*; for there are many things we have to do, and which give us hard work too: and some of you have often said to me “You work too hard,” when you have seen me laden with my heavy bag of books for lending. But I will put that on one side now, and just ask you to put it fairly to yourselves,—if you have so many difficulties and troubles, whether it would not be a comfort to feel you had some friend with whom you could talk them over, of whose kindness and wisdom you were quite sure, and whom you would not be afraid of troubling by going to consult him at any time a difficulty arose?

And you *have* such an one, or you may have at any moment: for your heavenly Father careth for you,—careth for the souls for whom Christ died. Never say, "Nobody cares for me," while the Bible tells us of the love of the Father's heart, of the love lavished on His creatures, of the love which gave His only begotten Son to a cruel death, and *spared Him not*, that a guilty world might be saved from the consequences of its sin. Is there not a yearning tenderness in many of the Bible words which might well touch hearts of stone? You think all the trouble comes to you, and that you are friendless and forgotten in the midst of them; and you forget the words, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" "a brother born for adversity," "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." *Jesus had compassion.* The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people, I have heard their cry, I know their sorrows." Words which might be multiplied indefinitely,—words which would surely refute your arguments as to a God "afar off," who takes no heed of the creatures of His hand. Words which have been proved true a thousand times over. It only remains to be asked, "Shall they be true for you?"

And this God, who speaks so tenderly, invites you into a place of refuge where you may know yourself safe though you see the storm raging around you; where, though you hear the strife of tongues and the clash of arms, you know your enemies cannot touch

you, "for His children shall have a place of refuge."
 "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the
 righteous runneth into it and is safe." What is that
 name? Jehovah, Jesus,—Jesus our Almighty Saviour.
 Are you safe? Have you fled for refuge? Have
 you said—

"Hide me, oh, my Saviour ! hide,
 Till the storm of life be past ;"
 "That, sheltered near Thy side,
 I may my fierce accuser face,
 And tell him Thou hast died."

Have you said—

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in thee."

We were staying up in the North once, in a beautiful part of the country where for miles together there appears a broad flat plain of table land, but where the rivers and streams run in deep gulleys and wooded dells, not to be seen until you get close to their precipitous sides ; and where often when we thought we had but five minutes' walk across a field to reach a certain spot, we found we were separated from it by a lovely dell. There the railway passes by fine viaducts over many a "Deep dale," and there are beautiful spots which well repay exploration. We went one day by train to a place some miles off to enjoy the view. Arrived at the station we found ourselves considerably above the place we had come

to see, and judged that a good way to see it, at least in the first instance, was to go on to the very high viaduct near, and then find our way down by the side, and so up another way, according to the time we had. So we inquired our way thither, and whether we could go along the line, as that would save us a long round. Yes: we might go along 't line, they told us, in their broad north-country tongue, but we must take care 't train. And truly we saw such a caution was needed, as the single line was cut through the solid rock with no room to spare on either side, and had a train overtaken us, save in one or two places, there would have been great difficulty in avoiding danger. Whether we should have had presence of mind enough to cling to the rock was happily not tested, as we passed safely; but when the monster mineral train came puffing up the incline over the narrow viaduct and into the still narrower cutting, with its two powerful engines, we were thankful that we were well out of the way.

This walk of ours came into my mind in thinking over that beautiful little story, "Cling to the Rock, Johnnie," which tells of the danger of two little children playing in a similar cutting among the mountains of America. How as the train came on, whistling to warn them out of the way, the little sister caught up the boy of three, and placing him in a cleft of the ragged rock, in which there was only room for one, bid him "Cling to the rock;" then,

rushing across to the other side, had barely time to press herself against the opposite rock, and in her alarm for the child's safety, cried continually "Cling to the rock, Johnnie: cling to the rock!" Had he not clung to the rock he must have lost his foothold and perished. And here is another parable for us. And as I heard it strikingly made use of in a sermon lately; remember there is no safety for us save in the cleft of the Rock of ages: and, blessed be God, there is not room there for *one* only, but for *all* who will see their danger and cling to the Rock. My friends, are you clinging to the Rock? "And the Lord said, I will put thee in a cleft of the Rock."

There in that "secret place" may'st thou "abide"

"Quiet from fear of ill:" though all around

Fierce storms are raging, *there so safely hide,*

And feel that *strength in sitting still is found.*

II.

HARD TIMES.

“The burdens of life are too heavy, and its duties are too hard for any man to bear by himself alone.”

“We can never so much as lay the dust under our feet with our tears; how then shall they soften the sharp stones that we tread on? Better look up to Him who trod the rough way for us, and He will brave up our heart to follow on after Him.”

HARD times! It is a relative term; and what is for one a very hard time, another can afford to laugh at. And it is even so at different times of our lives. Overtaken by a trouble at one time, we are ready to despair, and say, “All these things are against me,” while at another the very same trouble may seem just nothing at all. But which of us does not know something about hard times at some period of our lives? Whether from our own folly and indolence or rebellion, or from what seem to be unavoidable circumstances, we are brought into straits, and things seem to go hardly with us. From our childhood upwards, is not the murmur often heard, “It’s very hard”? In poverty

or wealth, in health and sickness, by reason of the will of others, or circumstances which we chafe at, the times are hard; and if we cannot look beyond them, we are apt to be very cast down, and think no one was ever put to it as we are. Therefore we need to know certainly that though there are hard times in each of our lives, they are but for our testing; that though there are difficulties, they may be overcome; that all the time our best Friend is watching us, ready with an encouraging word, ready with an outstretched arm to help and deliver the godly out of temptation, for He knoweth how, and we have only to learn to trust Him.

“For there hath no temptation taken you,”—no trial, no hard time overtaken you,—“but such as is common to man; but God will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Some of us talk as if all the hard times come to us, but “God hath set one over against the other” more evenly a great deal, I fancy, than we are inclined to think. So I have written these few chapters, hoping they may carry a little message of help and comfort to some of those who are battling with hard times, no matter wherein the hardness consists, knowing that the way to have things go easily in hard times is to be prepared for them, and prepared to meet them in a strength not our own. Things don’t seem half so hard if we have used a little forethought, and provided for the rub and the difficulty. Not that we need to go out to meet troubles,

and so bear the burden twice over; but "to be forewarned is to be forearmed;" and "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, happy is he: his heart is fixed, established; trusting in the Lord he shall not be afraid of evil tidings." (Ps. cxii.)

And as there are hard times in every life, so I suppose every one of us knows what it is to be fidgeted by a creaking hinge or wheel sometimes, and to plead, "Oil that door, if you please,—hinges and lock,—so that we may not be disturbed by that grating sound, and that the key may turn easily." You have noticed how on the arrival of a train at the station, on a long journey, immediate attention is paid to the grease-boxes, which are replenished to avoid the possibility of creaking, which means friction, which means fire and danger. Engines and axles must be kept oiled, if we want no accidents. And so, as often reminded, we need to keep ourselves, or be kept well oiled, that in the every-day friction of life we do not send forth sparks which may be the cause of much mischief, or at least prove that we ourselves are going very hardly and uncomfortably on the highway of life.

I heard of an old gentleman of eighty, who had an intense dislike to creaking hinges; so he always carried about with him a little phial of oil, and whenever he heard a creaking gate, whether belonging to high or low, rich or poor, churchyard or parsonage or hovel, he poured in some oil. I don't know whether he had read "The Oiled Feather," but he and his

little bottle were certainly a teaching parable to the people of that north-country village. Depend upon it, the wheels and hinges of life would go much smoother, and we should not be so fretted by the sound of grating and creaking which often vexes us, if we followed the old gentleman's example, and getting ourselves first anointed by the Spirit, took care always to carry about with us some of the essential oil of love and joy and gladness.

And these hard times, and these creaking hinges, are meant to lift us up; and if we met them rightly, would do so, telling us, "This is not your rest," and it is no use making believe that it is. As one has said, "Get the key to the cipher in which the Almighty expresses His purposes, and we can discern and discover that God never meant that man should take any path but that which leads to heaven. In what a multitude of ways has He shown us that it is upward He would have us go! What hosts of things and events and circumstances and actions stand like guide-posts of God's own making along the way of life, pointing us away from this world, inscribed in great letters, 'To heaven!'" Everything depends on our point of view; and if our affections are set down here, and we know nothing of a life beyond, we think it hard that all the troubles come to us; but if we have been taught by the Holy Spirit to trust that a loving Father orders all for us as He knows best how to do, we shall be able to think of the light affliction as but for a moment,

while looking for the glory which shall be revealed. Life will always go hardly with us if we take it up apart from Jesus; and the only way to get through at all is to remember Him who while He came to do the great work of reconciling the world unto God, walked through this work-a-day world,—in it, but not of it,—that He might leave us an example that we should walk even as He walked. He says, “Learn of Me: I am the Way, the Truth, and the life.” And following Jesus in the way, the hard times are scarcely noticed, and the creaking hinges cease to distract.

It may be that some of you will think from time to time as you are reading, “This and that does not apply to me.” Very well: put it on one side, and take just the word that does suit you. I hope there may be one. You know the saying, “If the cap fits, put it on;” but is it not too true that we very often try to put it on others instead of ourselves? We try to parry a home-thrust. I was one day reading some passages from a book that fitted in well with the subject we had been studying in our Bibles, and said well what I wanted to say; and glancing up from time to time, I saw they were telling words. One man, who was not so regular in coming as I should have liked, evidently winced under them, and looked as if he thought I was flinging them at him on purpose. So when he came to speak to me afterwards, I said, “Those were nice words for us all.” “Ah,” he said, “you hit me pretty sharp.” “But it was not I, it was the book; and as I did not know

you would be there to hear them, I am glad you were. You remember the saying, 'If the cap fits, put it on.' " *I did put it on,*" he said. So I could only pray that the impression made might be deepened, and the words be stamped in his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. And so with these words I have tried to write for you: I shall be content if any of you are helped by only one passage, and you can leave the rest for others in different circumstances.

III.

ARE YOU HAPPY ?

“God means every man to be happy : be sure
He sends us no sorrows that have not a cure.
Our duty down here is to do, not to know ;
Live as though life were earnest, and life will be so.”

“Behold my servants shall rejoice : my servants shall sing for
joy of heart.”

BUT you will think I am a long time coming to
my question, Are you happy ?

I suppose that every one of us wishes in his own way to be happy, tries in his own way. And a poor try it is too, sometimes ; when knowing all the time that it is a miserable way, the poor heart says, “I shall do as I please : why can't you let me alone to enjoy myself ?” While often the haunting fear comes lest this may be true : “Yet know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” (Eccles xi. 9.)

I had seen a poor man several times under the influence of drink, and thought I must try to find the right opportunity for speaking to him ; and his poor

wife said, "I wish you would." So one day I found him at home, and said, sorrowfully, "I am sure you are not happy, but I should like you to be so." He interrupted me sharply with the question, "Happy! Are *you* happy?" adding, "I know *I'm* not: I'm just miserable." But alas he turned away in spite of my entreaties, to drown the misery and stifle his conviction again in drink, only to awake to sober recollection tenfold more miserable than before. We may not be tempted to give way as that poor man did, but I should like each one who reads this to think over his question, "Are *you* happy?"

The answer we can give is of the utmost importance to us; and a blessed thing indeed it is to be certain that happiness is ours. If we do not wish to spend an eternity of misery in blackness and darkness, shut out from the presence of Him who would fain have all His creatures happy, and who makes all the joy of His children, we must see to it that we have learned the secret of happiness *now*, before it is too late to look for it.

That secret consists in knowing God as our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus; in feeling sure that for Jesus Christ's sake our sins are forgiven; in yielding ourselves to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, and in having the well-grounded assurance that, come life or come death, we are safe in Christ for time and for eternity. Are *you* happy then?

Some people imagine religion to be such a dull thing that they are afraid to think of taking it up. The

Bible says just the contrary: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" "they shall sing in the ways of the Lord." And the experience of a soul filled with a sense of God's love, satisfied with His goodness, what is that? Its peace flows as a river, while it echoes the words, "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life: Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance." "Let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them: let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee." (Psalm v. 11.)

So it certainly behoves those into whose hearts God hath shined, to strive in all things to make others see what a blessed thing it is to be basking in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness; and if the question is put to them, "Are you happy?" to be able joyfully to give a reason of the happiness and hope that is in them. For those around notice the lives of those who profess to have a better hope than themselves: they acknowledge the beauty of holiness and the necessity of a change from wrong doing to right. I remember being struck by the hearty commendation of a young working man, who, by God's grace, had been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; his landlady appealing to a fellow-lodger for a confirmation of her own opinion: "You could see directly how good he was; and he never forgot to say his prayers, did he Joe?" Very often has it been said, with reference

to one and another whose changed manner of life spoke of

“A new principle within
Of jealous godly fear;
A sensibility to sin,
A pain to feel it near,”—

“I’m sure he’s happy, and I know it would be a great deal better for me if I were like him.” One who confessed that he had been bad, though he thought he was trying to do better and had resisted much temptation, spoke of the delightful change in his brother, who was so changed and so happy he almost feared it could not last: he should have been ashamed to have been seen walking with him, talking about religion sometime ago, but somehow his brother got round him, and he didn’t seem to mind. He added, as his firm conviction, that he knew there was no true enjoyment in sin, and that those who found the right were happy for ever.

“Life, joy, warmth, and comfort, are wrapped up in the blessed sunshine.” What would this world be without the sun! Picture it if you can. Now what the sun is to our natural world Christ would be to every heart; and yet “some of us are very prone to sit in the shade, looking out perhaps into the sunshine, and all the time wondering that we are cold.”

As the sun shines everywhere over this earth so are the blessings of salvation universal. “God commandeth all men *everywhere* to repent; who will have all men to be saved and to come to the know-

ledge of the truth." Then why are not all saved, and living as His happy children?

On one of the occasions when the children of Israel vexed the Holy One by their rebellion and discontent, and sore judgment was abroad in the camp, fiery serpents being sent by the Lord (Numb. xxi. 6—9), when the people said, "We have sinned," God made a way of escape. He directed Moses to make a serpent of brass, and to put it on a pole that everyone that was bitten and looked on it might live. Would any of those stricken ones, as they felt the fever coursing through their veins, begin to question how it could be, and turn away in the vain hope of finding some other means of cure?

When the smitten rock gave forth the copious supply, and the refreshing stream swept by the fainting camp (Exodus xvii. 1—6; Numb. xx. 2, 7—11), would they question whence it came, and then turn away to wander thirsty still? Rather would they not stoop to quench their thirst (1 Cor. x. 4), and bathe the weary brow thankfully in the life and health-giving water? Now these people felt their need. They knew that the poison of the serpent was too potent to be conquered by any earthly remedy. They knew that they were like to die for thirst; and when "their soul fainted in them, they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." (Psalm cvii. 5, 6.)

What is the message for us in these histories but this: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilder-

ness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John iii. 14, 15); and "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) Perish we must if we will not acknowledge our inability to help ourselves; if we will not heed the word of exhortation: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isaiah xlv. 22.) "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.)

In the case of the Israelites bitten by the fiery serpents, it was necessary that they should look on the serpent of brass. In the case of the souls poisoned even to death by "that old serpent the devil," it is necessary that they look unto Jesus. When the Saviour was on earth, they brought unto Him all manner of sick persons and those that were possessed with devils, and He healed them. We are told "as many as touched were made perfectly whole." As many as felt their need and came into contact with Jesus "were healed of whatsoever disease they had." And now, in order that those "inestimable blessings which Christ, by His precious bloodshedding, hath obtained to us," may be secured to us, it is only needful that we come into contact with Jesus. Not indeed with the grasp of the bodily hand may we lay hold of Him, as the poor trembling woman who came in the crowd behind Him touched the

hem of His garment; but with the hand of faith, taking hold of God's strength that we may make peace with Him (Isaiah xxvii. 5), we may get as near as she. Come then all to Jesus, and find in Him, in "whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," all that can meet the utmost need of the most needy of His creatures; for "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto Me and rest:
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,—
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold I freely give
The living water: thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

This is to be happy,—to get into contact with Jesus, and feel that to our soul He is fulfilling His gracious promises, and giving us the "more grace" that we need. When Peter, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, had bidden a lame man rise and walk, the man "entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God" (Acts iii. 8),

rejoicing in the new spring of enjoyment opened to him in the sense of health, and the cure of his lameness. "And all the people saw him walking and praising God:" they saw his gladness and the reason for it. And when a soul is put into the narrow way and enabled to walk in the light of the Lord, all around should be able to see it, as we said before. We read of a seeking soul whose felt need was met and satisfied by the showing forth of Jesus to him by the Evangelist Philip, that "he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts viii. 39.) And God is ever ready to show to a seeking soul the joy of His salvation.

Is it a dull thing, when you are feeling most utterly weak and helpless, to know that you are cared for and watched over by the tenderest love possible? Is it a dull thing to have all your cares soothed away, and your pain eased by the touch and sympathy of a wise friend? If so religion is a dull thing. But if, on the contrary, the assurance of having a sympathising friend to turn to, loving and strong enough to help in all times of difficulty and danger, is a happy thing; then indeed are they happy who, turning away from earth's best comforters, listen to the words, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, yea I will help thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." (Isaiah. Hebrews.) "For the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom.

xiv. 17.) "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. viii. 10.) Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and there is no happiness like that which dwells in the forgiven soul. "Happy is the people that is in such a case;" yea, happy are those to whom the Saviour says, "Your joy no man taketh from you." (John xvi. 22.)

And you whose eye is glancing on this page, are you one of the happy ones? or are you still turning away from Jesus and happiness?

Ah, poor weary mother, bowed down with your many cares,—with your sick little child requiring all your time and attention, and with many heart sorrows which, as you truly say, are all your own, to be borne patiently,—do you say there is no happiness, no peace for you?

Ah, poor hard working man, vexed by want of work or short work, and so many mouths to feed; or the weary feeling that though the work is there, you haven't the strength to do it you once had,—do you say, "Don't talk to me of happiness; it's to be hoped the next world will be happier than this"? My friend, this is the seed-time for eternity; and the next world will only carry on and complete a happiness or a misery begun in this. So it is most important that we see to it, that we have *now* the secret of happiness: that we can sing the

"Song which tells of banished fears,
Of pardoned sins and dried up tears,"

so that we may by and bye join its chorus in heaven ; that the peace of God *now* may rule in our hearts in spite of all the cares and perplexities that may arise, so that by and by we may live in that home where no sorrow can come, "where all tears shall be wiped away, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation.)

Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to say there are no sorrows for those who love God ; the very fact of sin being in the world necessarily makes sorrow : but I want you to see that if you love and trust the Lord Jesus, the edge of the sorrow, the sting of the pain, is gone for you, and you will be able to understand what Paul meant when he said, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." (2 Cor vi. 10.)

What makes the difference between a dull day and a bright one,—a miserable day, as we sometimes say, and a beautiful cheery one? Only a cloud. When the clouds hide the sun we feel there is something wanting: when the sun shines brightly we feel the brighter for it. And that is all the difference between a happy and a miserable heart,—a bright or a wretched home: a cloud shutting off the sunshine. For the sunshine is there though we cannot see it. Clouds are very partial, and we know the sun may be shining most cheerily at a very little distance from where we are shivering for want of its bright beams.

"Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings." Has

He so arisen for us? Are we coming to the light to sun ourselves in His beams? Do we know that the "Lord God is a Sun and Shield" for us? He may be shining into a home not very far from ours,—He may be brightening a life under our very roof: but what about ourselves? Have we opened the shutters of unbelief, of pride, of hardness, to let in the daylight? Have we asked Him to take away everything that comes between us and Him, to "cast down every imagination and every high thing that exalteth itself"? You know a very little thing, much smaller than the sun appears to be, will yet, if it is close to our eye, prevent our seeing the sun: so a very little thing, as we deem it, of earth's cares, or pleasures, or sins, being close to us and occupying our vision, will prevent us from seeing Jesus. But do we wish to have the light break in which shall shine more and more unto the perfect day? Do you say, "Oh that it would shine on me! I am not happy, I am not good, but I should like to be." Only let the wish be heartfelt, and the pleading earnest, and of you it shall soon be said, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

Yes, it is *only a cloud*. Then why let that make the difference any longer, when He is ready to shine down into our hearts, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? (2 Cor. iv. 6.) *Only a cloud*. But why need we shiver under a cloud when He has said, "I

am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake:" "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." (Isaiah xliii. 25; xliv. 22.) "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Psalm xcvi. 11.)

The plague of the Egyptian darkness was a parable for all time, when the despisers of God were shivering in the horror of a darkness that might be felt, while the children of Israel, God's people, "had light in their dwellings:" "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." (Exodus x. 21—23; Psalm cxii. 4.) Let the sincere and tender soul remember that, "and stay upon his God" (Isaiah l. 10), and remember also what comforted a soul under a cloud long ago: "When I sit in darkness *the Lord shall be a light unto me.*" (Micah. vii. 8.) Many a weary soul perplexes itself sorely because it will not trust Christ simply; and it will look out for clouds, and will look on to the difficult paths it may have to tread, and the hard lessons it may have to learn, instead of thanking God for the grace which has put the feet into the narrow way, and lights the path, and has taught the first lessons in the school of Christ.—What grace has begun grace will go on to perform. So if we have but learnt our A B C let us be thankful that we have not got to sit down and learn the alphabet. If God has taught us to see ourselves sinners and made us to long after holiness, let us trust Him, "that He, which hath begun the good

work, will perform it until the day of Christ." (Phil i. 6.) If we are conscious of ever so little light and gladness where all was darkness and misery, let us encourage ourselves with the thought, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord endureth for ever; forsake not the work of Thine own hands." (Psalm cxxxviii. 8.)

And as we know more of His love and wondrous working we shall understand how a poor woman could say, in the midst of circumstances which would seem enough to crush the joy out of any life,—loneliness, poverty and sickness,—"I'm never unhappy." And if we are getting closer to Him who says, "I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul" (Jer. xxxi. 25), we shall find ourselves growing happier every day, to lose ourselves at last in that perfect happiness which the Psalmist was looking forward to when he said, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for ever more:" "I shall be satisfied when I awakè with Thy likeness." (Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15.)

For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) But we know that there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, because there shall be no more the curse of sin in the heaven where God Himself shall be with His people; where they have no need of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Rev. xxi. xxii.)

“In Thy light shall we see light.” It is our own fault then, simply and entirely, if we are not happy. Do you mean to be happy or miserable ?

“Oh send out Thy light and Thy truth : let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy will.” “Oh come ye, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

My friends, *are you all happy ?*

“He is the happy man whose life e'en now
Shows somewhat of the happier life to come.”

“Happy souls that find a rest
In a heavenly Father's breast :
Happy souls ! their praises flow
Even in this vale of woe.

“On they go from strength to strength,
Till they reach Thy throne at length ;
At Thy feet adoring fall
Who hast led them safe through all.

“Lord, be mine this prize to win :
Guide me through a world of sin ;
Keep me by Thy saving grace,
Give me at Thy side a place.”

Is this your earnest wish ? If so, rest assured that He will fulfil the desire of your heart.

IV.

MISSIONS AND MISSIONERS.

“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.”

“Lord, who hath believed our report?”

IN February, 1874, a great Mission was held in London. I need hardly stop to remind you what that means; nevertheless, let us think over the subject a little, for you often hear of a Mission in these days, and the word has been taken to mean a particular effort at a given time, though as we shall see, the work is always going on.

We read of clever courtiers being sent on a mission to a foreign kingdom, entrusted with a particular message, and in the absence of the ability to communicate with the Home Government on matters requiring instant decision, having full leave to make such use of their power and information as they shall see necessary to the arrangement of the business on which they may have been sent.

Not such a mission is that which then attracted the eyes of the world. The parallel fails in many points.

A mission implies a message, and a bearer of that message. It implies a most careful selection of the right person as the bearer of the message. It implies most careful preparation and much thought, both for the sent one or missionary, and the organizer of the mission. It generally implies that some misunderstanding has arisen,—that something is at fault between two parties which the mission is to be the means of clearing up.

But the Mission in London: what about that? I know that some of you studied the objections to it, and filled your mouths with stock arguments against religion being crammed down your throats when you hadn't time or inclination for it; that when some of you were asked to go to the special services, you said you should go to church when you pleased, and you weren't going to be driven to it; and some of you did please, and will have to thank God throughout eternity that He inclined your heart to listen to His gracious invitations sent through His servants.

And don't you think that poor girl who was run over after leaving a church where she had been listening to a mission preacher, must have thanked God for the mission? Wandering past the church in a purposeless manner, a lady asked her to come in to the service. She was persuaded, and at the

close the lady watched for her, pressed home the preacher's words by giving her some texts to search for and ponder over in her Bible, and promised to call and see her. Alas, she had no Bible! so the lady gave up her own, that the path of a seeking soul might be lighted by the rays of God's own truth. The next day, on visiting the hospital, the lady found this poor girl had died from the effects of an accident. Poor, did I say? Not so: she had listened to the heavenly call; she had proved for herself that "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) She knew that the words of Jesus were true, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but *is passed from death unto life.*" (John v. 24.) "The sting of death" was gone, and she could die happily, because "*it was all settled yesterday.*" But if the accident had happened *yesterday*, or she had *put off only for one day* giving heed to the things which she had heard, what a different death-bed hers would have been! Dear friends, hear, not with the ear only, but with the heart and the understanding. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

Mistakes there may have been, evil mixed with good there may have been; defects in the plan, faults in carrying out the plan; but "God can write straight on crooked lines," and wherever there has been much prayer for guidance and blessing, we can

trust Him that He will overrule the mistakes, and bring good out of the evil. And surely the idea was grand to make a great united onslaught on one of Satan's strongholds,—to try what “a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull altogether” would do (although a few strands of the rope gave way, and a few hands declined to pull),—to show the world that, busy people as we are, “making haste to get rich,” and spending much time in the important amusement of killing time and trying to enjoy ourselves, we yet could afford to have a lull, and for a few short days put religion forward before all the people as the *first* thing. It was a great thing to rouse all those who love God to take a commission afresh from His hand, and “go out into the streets and highways, and compel” the wayfarers “to come in.” It was a great thing that the effort should be made to reach the ear of all whom the glorious news concerns; that the royal proclamation of free pardon, aye, and a place at the King's right hand, might wake echoes in weary, longing, unsatisfied hearts; if so that some “far off” might draw near, not to the ambassador only, but to the King Himself, and prove that the message borne by the servant was true.

And now to convince ourselves that it is no new thought of this nineteenth century, let us glance at a few recorded missions, some successful and attended with the happiest results; the first apparently unsuccessful.

There was a Missioner of ancient time, who for

120 years was a preacher of righteousness by lip and life-work, but his message was unheeded; and of all who heard Noah speak and saw him work, how many were saved with him in the ark? Just his own family that God shut in with him. Imagine, if you can, the clamouring for admittance into the ark of safety, the exceeding bitter cries which must have rent the air when the first pattering raindrops fell from the heavy clouds on the scoffers, as they saw "the fountains of the great deep broken up," and knew in very truth that Noah had spoken words of sober, earnest warning.

Look at another Missioner. See him pacing the streets of a gigantic and luxurious city, while the warning cry, ringing ever and anon, sounds above the hum of the busy multitude: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Perchance the inhabitants of that gorgeous city scoffed at first; but the message of the Prophet Jonah went home, and the great city humbled itself, and beginning with the King on his throne, the people one and all lay in sackcloth and ashes before the great and dreadful God who had pronounced vengeance upon it. There was a crying mightily to God; there was a turning from their evil way; and God, seeing and hearing, turned away from His fierce anger. (Jonah iii.)

Look again. Who are these two men? A King, abject in his poverty of spirit, cowering before a poor despised prophet, most kingly in his manner and demeanor. Ahab, the wicked King of Israel, meets

the missionary Prophet Elijah with a question on two different occasions: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (1 Kings xviii. 17.) In which question we see one of the tricks of the human heart, which so often tries to transfer its feelings to another, as a diseased mind often identifies itself with another, and tries to persuade that other that he is feeling and suffering its own troubles. Feeling the unrest of sin, Ahab endeavoured to persuade himself that Elijah had caused the trouble, when he was only about to point it out and show the King its real root. After Elijah's mission in the face of all Israel had been performed, the King again meets him with a question,—“Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” (1 Kings xxi. 20.) But the message of the missionary produced its effect; and God, seeing the proud spirit humbled, delayed the threatened ill. “Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? I will not bring the evil in his days.” Our gracious and long-suffering God is always looking for this humbling of spirit, and ready to deal tenderly with it. “The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand.” (Ps. xiv. 2.) “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not, He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.” (Job xxxiii. 27, 28.) And He says, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.” (Is. lxvi. 2.)

See him who came in the spirit and power of Elias, speaking to the vast crowds who were drawn to the deserts to hear this marvellous preacher. Listen to the burden of his message: "*Repent.*" See how he pointed his sermon to the faults and needs of those before him,—how he showed each one not to listen for what another was to do, but only for what concerned himself and his circumstances,—how he warned those who prided themselves on their religion, that it was all no use unless they proved its reality by the holiness of their lives. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." A warning which is needed yet, for we find people now-a-days thinking themselves all right because they are not so bad as their neighbours,—because they go to church or to chapel regularly, or only sometimes,—because they have been baptized, and live in a Christian country, bearing a Christian name. I met with some only lately who were perfectly satisfied on the score of their religion, because they belonged to the Wesleyans, although they were taking no heed of God's day, and seemed quite indifferent to the requirements even of their own selected code. It won't do, friends. That "covering is too narrow that a man can wrap himself in it;" and a miserable plight all such will be in when this even is stripped off, and the naked soul stands in the presence of its Judge. Listen, I beseech, you, then, *now* to the warning cry of John the Baptist: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." (Matt. iii. 2—9.) And listen again to his further admonition: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John i. 29.) Turn over but a leaf of your Bibles, and you find John's message reiterated by Him whose way John came to prepare: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iv. 17.) Another leaf, and you find the warning cry put into the lips of some of the first Gospel missionaries (Matt. x. 7), of whose sending forth by two and two, we read in Mark vi. 7—12: "And they went out and preached that men should repent."

After this we read of a few more Missions in the Church history contained in the Acts of the Apostles and in later histories, all having the same end,—being a special effort to bring the Gospel close to souls, for rousing the impenitent, quickening the lifeless; and cheering, strengthening, and comforting those who already know its power.

And now we come to the grandest, most wonderful Mission of all, as we look again and listen to One who announced Himself as the Sent One.

Far back in a bye-past eternity, in the high court of Heaven, was this mission planned,—a mission such as could never have been conceived by man,—such as in its development attracted the wonder and desire of the angels to look into and understand, and never can exhaust our wonder, love, and praise. Out of which has sprung every mission effort ever since

planned and carried out; these very missions being only efforts to bring home to the minds of men what that great mission was, and why it was undertaken.

A little speck in God's creation is drifting away from Him, for evil has made its way in to spoil a fair world, which when it came from its Maker's hand was pronounced "very good." "That old serpent the devil" has been only too successful with his devices, and Adam and Eve have fallen before his temptation. God's work is marred, and Satan seems to have gained a dire victory. God had placed Adam and Eve in the beautiful garden of Eden, as we all know, with but one restriction: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. ii. 17.) It might have been thought obedience would be very easy, but they were not proof against temptation, and so sin came into the world, and death by sin.

It is not for us to ask why God allowed this, or why He allows temptation now. A man who was speaking of the *contradictions of the Bible*, and proving me with hard questions,—upsetting questions to all faith in the Bible, as he deemed them,—asked me *why*? But I could only say, The answer to those questions must be left; that we were even as little children, with very little power of comprehension; and even as to many of his child's questions he had to say, "I cannot answer," or it may be, "It is not proper for you to know, you could not understand;

by and bye, when you are older and wiser, you will know," so it is with many of the things which puzzle us,—things which a carnal mind which is at enmity with God, and exalting itself with fleshly wisdom, lays hold of to hinder the entrance of God's truth into the heart; and as to God allowing temptation (as he was a builder), I just asked him if he would use a piece of iron that had not been through the furnace, or a girder that had not been tested.

Then appeared the fruit of that pre-arranged mission, when justice being satisfied, the voice of mercy could be heard, and the promise of a Deliverer could be uttered with the sentence of just anger and offended holiness. Man failing in obedience, God's holy law broken, the demands of justice must be met; and the holy and only beloved Son of God was prepared to stand in the breach, "to give His life a ransom for many, that by the obedience of one" might "many be made righteous." Freely He offered Himself, saying, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, oh my God; I am content to do it." He knew full well what it would cost Him when the fiat went forth, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow,—

"But out of pity Jesus said
He'd bear the punishment instead,"

and He would not and could not draw back. And then the sentence of death for man was reversed, and the merciful word was heard, "Deliver him from going down into the pit: I have found a ransom."

(Job xxxiii. 24.) And in due time, "when the fullness of the time was come, and *God sent forth His Son*, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. iv. 4, 5), the voice was heard by some on earth from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5.)

And oh, what a record is that of the years spent on earth by this loving, compassionate One, who came from the bosom of the Father to make an atonement for us,—to fulfil all righteousness, all the demands of a holy law, and to open a way to the Father's favour, by His death for sinners! "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 3, 4.) When speaking of

"His sojourn in this vale of tears,
The tale of love unfolded in those years
Of sinless suffering and patient grace,"

a man said, "He was born to it." So He was: but why? He need not have been. He might have left us alone in our misery. It is a mystery of love and condescension that we cannot fathom. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen

of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God.*" (1 Peter iii. 18.)

"Oh, wondrous love, to bleed and die,
That guilty sinners such as I
Might full salvation know!"

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) Do you believe it? or are you adding to the heap of scorn and contumely cast upon Him from the moment He began to execute His mission? See how He sets it before us in a parable. (Mark xii. 1—8.) Messengers many had been sent, only to be illtreated; so the Lord of the vineyard is described as saying, "What shall I do?"—"Having therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son." But no: "They took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard." Christ said He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But," precious words for anxious souls, "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John i. 11, 12.)

Missions are generally sent to a potentate to sue for mercy (Luke xiv. 32) or exchange favours. Be-

hold the difference here: a mighty King sues for reconciliation with His rebel subjects; a justly offended Father sends messages of tender love to children who treat Him with such indignity as to "turn the back and not the face,"—the very height of rudeness and scorn thus to treat even a stranger. All difficulties have been taken out of the way by this wondrous work of Jesus, the Son of God, our Saviour. Have we then listened to the message of grace, and laid hold on a full salvation? and are we living such a life as St. Paul describes, when he says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? (Gal. ii. 20.)

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
 Thou art scatt'ring full and free,—
 Showers the thirsty land refreshing:
 Let some droppings fall on me,—even me.

"Pass me not, O gracious Father,
 Sinful though my heart may be;
 Thou might'st leave me, but the rather
 Let Thy mercy light on me,—even me.

"Pass me not, O gracious Saviour,
 Let me love and cling to Thee;
 I am longing for Thy favour:
 Whilst thou'rt calling, O call me,—even me.

"Pass me not, O mighty Spirit,
 Thou canst make the blind to see;
 Witnesser of Jesus' merit,
 Speak the word of power to me,—even me.

- “ Have I long in sin been sleeping,—
Long been slighting, grieving Thee?
Has the world my heart been keeping?
O forgive and rescue me,—even me.
- “ Love of God so pure and changeless,
Blood of Christ so rich and free,
Grace of God so strong and boundless,
Magnify it all in me,—even me.
- “ Pass me not : but pardon bringing,
Bind my heart, O Lord, to Thee ;
Whilst the streams of life are springing,
Blessing others, O bless me,—even me.”

V.

SOMETHING COMING AND
ESTIMATES.

“In this great world of our's
Nothing is small or poor ;
For each hour's smallest thing is knit
To the long evermore.

“The common deed or word
Of which we took no heed,
Ends in a vast eternity,
As in the tree the seed.”

THE London Mission is over. It only lasted a few days, and is now a thing of the past. What then? Are we to be as though it had not been: can we be? Nay, verily, that opportunity, like all others, was a thing to be accounted for. Before it you were asked earnestly to come to the Mission services that you might hear the message for yourselves. After the Mission you were entreated to give the more earnest heed to the things which you had heard, lest you should let them slip. Oh, terrible thought, there were those who refused their own mercy, and must perish through their own fault!

We often feel rather saddened to think it is *the last time*. And even when last times make us glad they often incline us to serious thought. It must have been the last time for some souls when they listened in that mission week to God's truth: it may have been the last time the rope could be flung to some sinking soul, the last time it would hear the entreaty to take hold of Christ's salvation. It was the last time Jesus of Nazareth passed by on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, when blind Bartimeus determined to get a blessing: if he had lost that opportunity he might have remained blind and un-blessed. Last times must come to you. Listen then to the word of exhortation, ere it is too late resolve that as Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, dispensing grace, you will be blessed. Listen to every sermon as if it were certain to be the last you will ever hear. Oh, what a difference there would be in our congregations if we so listened! the listlessness, the sleepiness, the listening for others, the wandering thoughts, the criticising the preacher's manner or matter, would all be put away, and be replaced by an earnest heartfelt attention as to God's own message from the lips of His messenger. Live every day as if it were to be your last. Oh, what different lives we should lead if we were *certain* that our days were numbered, and that this very night our souls would be required of us! how careful we should be of the words we speak, of the places we frequent, of the companions with whom we spend our time. Do all

your work as under the eye of your Master in heaven, and as if it was to be the last time you would have to do it, that yours may be the joy and blessedness of the blessed servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.

From the time that the Mission in London was planned, months before it was carried out, God's people earnestly desiring a blessing, took the determination of one of old: "I give myself unto prayer." They determined to give Him no rest; they determined that there should be no room for the complaint, "There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee;" determined to "prove" Him, whether He would not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that there should not be room enough to receive it. And He who says, "Open thy mouth *wide*, and I will fill it," ever shows Himself as good as His word. He promises the Holy Spirit to them that ask, and He gives it. He says, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring." And he has done it. And if the mission had only done this,—roused a spirit of prayer among God's own people,—we might well thank Him for it. Outsiders saw only a week of multiplied services; but they did not know of the prayers that had been going up daily for an outpouring of the Spirit, nor understand that perhaps the softening in their own hearts under some powerful appeal from God's Word, made by a

stranger, was an answer to a prayer from some far-away country place where a few of "the Lord's remembrancers" had been pleading that London might yield to the influence brought to bear upon it.

Some two years ago a miner's wife said to me she thought there must be something coming, as so many of their people were thinking more,—turning over a new leaf, and beginning to love God. Yes, something is coming; and shall you be prepared for it? God is waiting to be gracious: is your heart ready to receive a blessing? The judgment day,—the day of the Lord,—is coming. The end of all the things we see around is coming. Jesus is coming to take His own people to Himself. We do not say how or when; but we know these things are certain, though perhaps death may be first coming to you and me. Are you ready for any and every emergency?

There had been a time of trouble, famine, fear, oppression, by reason of a Syrian army encamped around Samaria. The word of the Lord came to Elisha on a certain day and He announced that "to-morrow about this time" the trouble should be past. (2 Kings vii.) There was certainly but the bare word of the Lord to rest on: there was no other sign; and a man high in the King's favour dared to dispute the word of the Lord. The prophet was authorized to say that according to his unbelief it should be to him: the thing should be, and he should see it, but he should have no participation in the blessing. And it was even so. Four lepers,

thinking that they might as well die by the hand of the Syrians as by starvation, made the joyful discovery that in the abandoned camp of the enemy there was enough and to spare. God had made "the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses," and they fled as "the wicked flee when no man pursueth," leaving a plentiful provision for the fainting people of the city. The lepers considering among themselves, "We do not well: this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace," brought the tidings to the King's household, and on confirmation of the good news "the people went out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians." So the word of the Lord came to pass,—and to the unbelieving lord also, for he saw it, but had no enjoyment of it, as "the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died."

I fear me some are saying, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be," limiting the Holy One in various ways when we speak of the triumphs of the Gospel or of what this world might be did all yield themselves to it; but we do hear of "showers of blessing" everywhere,—“the Lord working mightily with the Word.” In Scotland, in India, in all parts there is a spirit of inquiry abroad. There we plainly see that God's Spirit is working. Men are going, "with weeping and with supplication," seeking the Lord, and asking "the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward." And shall the blessing come close to us and yet we not be

blessed, because we will not believe our want of it, or the possibility of obtaining it?

The work of the Mission is not done: nay, it is always going on. It was only brought a little more into prominence: that prominence made some little excitement; and sometimes after excitement, physical or mental, we sink back into deeper lethargy. This was what many feared with regard to the Mission; but we trust it has not been so. After any such special effort Satan tries to lull souls back, in various ways, to sleep again: but it must not be. We must all keep each other up to the mark, that the world may not be able to say it was but a passing excitement, but that lasting effects may be seen, in the waste places being reclaimed and the broken walls built up and a number of halting souls persuaded to take the decisive step. It roused sleeping souls: it set some a-thinking why all this fuss was made; it made some determine that as they were made so welcome at church, and found they could go with a little effort, they might as well make the effort again and go on coming. The hearts of God's own people were refreshed and lifted up by intercourse with one another,—by seeing what great things the Lord can do, and by meeting Him more in His word and in His house, and they were roused to more earnestness of action and more longings after holiness of life.

Think of that time, not so very long ago, when trouble was in the Royal household by reason of the sore sickness of the Prince of Wales, and the heart

of the nation was stirred, and each one took the trouble home as a personal one.

Trouble is a very good detector, and those whose friendship is not worth having will drop off from a man when he is in trouble; but real friends will rally round with true sympathy. There is nothing like trouble, too, for bringing out a man's better feelings. There had been some little murmuring, and disaffected spirits had said hard things about those in high places. It was all gone before the trouble: there was no room for jealousies in hearts full of anxiety. The heir to the throne,—a young man in the prime of life,—was stricken down, and all our loyalty was called out.

We had known that the Prince was ill, but we had never thought he was going to die; so when the news came that he was in the grasp of death, and that a few hours must decide the issue, it came as a sudden shock. How the prayer of the nation went up as one sob that the sickness might not be unto death, but for the glory of God! It might have been one dear by the ties of blood to every heart, whose illness so touched us. But who talked of excitement then? Anxious faces met everywhere: eagerly was the latest intelligence inquired for, and anxious hearts betook themselves again to prayer for the life so precious to the Royal Family and so precious to the nation. The telegraph carried the news to distant lands and brought back word that prayer was being made unceasingly.

And when on that wintry Sunday the prayers of each congregation were asked for Albert Edward Prince of Wales in his grievous sickness, and for the Royal mother and young wife and family of the stricken Prince, with a choking voice in the dread fear that even then he might have passed the gates of death; and when many a tearful eye testified to the emotion which roused most earnest prayer, did anyone say there was too much excitement then? Would that we all always joined in the prayers in God's house and prayed privately, as fervently as at that time when our sympathies were awakened for the Queen, the Royal Family, and those in authority over us, whose feet are truly set in slippery places!

And when in God's mercy the fever was checked, and the tide of feeling was turned, and grateful hearts thanked God for the mercy,—and when in due time the whole nation gave itself up to a day of thanksgiving, when the Royal Family with the recovered Prince went to St. Paul's to return thanks, publicly, for the late mercies vouchsafed to them,—who talked of excitement then? But when earnest appeals and strenuous efforts are made to rouse people to pray and praise for themselves, then there is too much excitement.

When shall we learn to take a true estimate of the things which are seen which are temporal, and the things which are not seen which are eternal,—God's estimate of them? We know that is very different from ours on many points. How often do

we take an utterly *wrong* estimate of things,—putting the less in the place of the greater, the gold and the gift in place of the temple and the altar, as our Lord tells the Jews of His time they did: the creature in the place of the Creator, extolling a work and losing sight of its author.

We might have thought that well-to-do man described in the parable (Luke xii. 16) a fit subject for envy, with his rapidly increasing riches; and we hear the verdict,—*Thou fool*. “For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” “*So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.*” God wills us to have treasure; but then it must be laid up in heaven, or it is only a counterfeit,—something not worth the name. “The fear of the Lord is His treasure.” Is it yours? or is it true of you like those of old? “He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.” (Hag. i. 6.) More of us are doing this than would like to think it, I fancy. Ah, I think I see them dropping out as you go along,—you taking no heed, but your friends seeing it sorrowfully! What good does your work do you, or the high wages that some of you get? Very little *apparent*, and no *real* good. You see the mistakes that others have made in the matter, and you think that you will be wiser,—you will spend your money differently,—you will use your time and opportunities better: but do you? As long as you labour *only* for the meat that perisheth, as long as you live *only* for this

life, without having thought of making provision for the future, you are spending your "money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which satisfieth not." (Isa. lv. 2.) You are making a great mistake: you are only earning wages to put it in a bag with holes; only laying up treasure that will perish with the using: laying it up "where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." (Matt. vi. 19.)

You "never heard of any one growing rich by religion." Perhaps not: I have heard of many seeming to be made the poorer. Some whose Sunday earnings were larger than those of all the week besides, when taught by the Spirit of God, giving them up without a word from man; because "it won't do to live two lives," and they feel that religion must influence the whole life, and every one of God's commandments must be kept. Having received the truth in the love of it in a mission service, they were content to trust Him to make it up to them, or ready to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," and never letting anyone know of the sacrifice till it was accidently found out some time afterwards. But what make you of this? "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) And, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through *His poverty might become rich.*" (2 Cor. viii. 9.) We read also of those who

may be poor in this world, *yet rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.*" And what do you know of "the unsearchable riches of Christ"? "Rich toward God." Did you ever think of that expression? "According to the riches of His grace" He would have us rich: He would have us to be the "heirs of the kingdom,—joint heirs with Christ;" but to too many He has to say, "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods; and knowest not that thou art poor: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." (Rev. iii. 17, 18.) "Oh, what an unspeakable gift: what a *treasure* is our living, loving, adorable Redeemer!" wrote one who has since gone to be with Jesus.

Again: when shall we learn God's estimate of our religion and of our state before Him, and of sin? How we do deceive ourselves! It was but lately that one who ought to have known better, "belonging to the Wesleyans," speaking of a poor man I had seen terribly drunk said, "He hasn't at all a bad heart. He only gives way now and then." Whereas the Bible tells us that we have all bad hearts, "deceitful above all things, desperately wicked," and that "there is none that doeth good, no not one." And the poor man himself blessed "himself in his heart saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." God's terrible verdict is, "The Lord will not spare him." (Deut. xxix. 19, 20.)

And as to our religion. What is God's estimate

of Cain's? For too many of our offerings are just like his, and our religion like that of the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as bad as other people. When we pride ourselves on our good lives and our church-going, it is just like Cain's offering of fruit and flowers,—very beautiful in the eyes of man, but unto which *God had no respect*. Why not? Because it lacked one thing,—the very foundation-stone of all true religion: the acknowledgment of guilt and of the need of an atonement,—the knowledge of pardon through the “shedding of blood,” without which there “is no remission.” The so-called religion of so many lacks this one thing,—submission to God's righteousness. We don't like to believe the Bible words, and try to get over them: they hurt our pride, that “all flesh should be guilty before God that every mouth may be stopped,”—we want to fill our mouths with arguments and excuses. But though we may be “all our lives trying to wash our filthy rags clean,” though we may try to live so that man can say naught against us, there it stands written, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all.” And though we may clothe ourselves in a fair seeming before men, the detecting eye of the Judge will see the specks we have been trying to hide or to wash away,—the detecting finger will point to the one thing lacking; and when it is too late to mend it, man's patchwork religion will fall to pieces, and the word will be true, “and thou mourn at the last.”

No: if we want to come to God we must take His estimate of ourselves and of the requirements of His law, "which is holy and just and good." "And what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. vi. 8.) Can we meet that requirement? Nay, verily. St. James says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man;" but, alas, "in many things we offend all." And Micah is desired to mention the *little things*,—the deceitful tongue, deceitful weights, scant measure, violence,—which are so often excused, but which with other such like *little things* show that the root of the tree being corrupt it cannot bring forth good fruit. God says, "They have altogether gone out of the way," "though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me." And when God's Spirit convinces us of sin, that we are verily guilty concerning these things, we can only cry out, "How can a man be just with God?" and see that there is no way of escape but in God's way. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." "For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The throne of God was reared
Above the awful place;
His justice there appeared
And cursed me to my face.

- “I pled good works : but, ah !
A voice in fury cried,—
‘No flesh by deeds of law
Can e’er be justified.’
- “To mercy next I fled :
But justice frowned again,
Demanding to be paid
A debt of endless pain.
- “My sins in wild array
Now stood before my view :
I felt I could not pay,
And knew not what to do.
- “Distracted and ashamed,
I groaned beneath my load :
When, lo ! a voice proclaimed,—
‘Behold the Lamb of God !’
.
- “I viewed the hands and feet,
I saw the wounded side :
A sacrifice complete,—
My Jesus crucified !
.
- “I gave Him all my sin,
My rags and my disgrace :
He gave me, white and clean,
His glorious righteousness.
.
- “Thus, ransomed and forgiven
I keep the law divine ;
But not to purchase heaven,—
For that’s already mine.
- “Of all I have or do,
‘My own’ I nothing call :
I’m Christ’s : and oh, ’tis true,
That CHRIST’S my ALL IN ALL !”

VI.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST.

“That which hath been is now ;
The *now* repeats the *long ago*.”

“Faith in to-morrow instead of Christ, is Satan’s nurse for man’s perdition.”

LONG years ago a terrible plague broke out in London, and there was hardly a house in which there was not one dead. At first the churches were crowded with terrified people imploring that the calamity might pass away. But as the disease still raged, the people feared to increase the danger of infection by contact with each other ; the churches were shut up, and they assembled under the open canopy of heaven, the preacher beneath the shade of some spreading forest tree. The old tradition lingers yet about a neighbourhood, where “the Gospel oak” has long since fallen before the woodman’s axe, to make room for the houses needed by the increasing population of the great city.

The disease was carried to a little village in Derbyshire,—it was supposed, in a parcel of clothes from

London ; and the village was at once shut off from communication with the surrounding villages. Terror seized the people, which the noble clergyman and his wife strove to allay, by remaining at their post to warn, comfort, and exhort. Afraid to meet for worship in the church, the villagers were wont to gather in a pretty, leafy, rocky dell, where from a sort of natural pulpit,—arched with stone, and still pointed out as “Mompessan’s pulpit,”—the Word of life was expounded to the affrighted people, and they were bidden to apply directly to the great Physician. I have stood in that pulpit, and gone back, in imagination, to that terrible time. Can you not fancy how the preacher in earnest tones would teach his people,—telling them of the safe shelter in the secret place of the most High, under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. xci.) ; and that, *hidden there*, no one need be afraid of the pestilence that walked in darkness, nor of the destruction that wasted at noon-day, as they only touched the body,—and “to be absent from the body” is to be “present with the Lord.” There was no need to bid the people to prayer then. They were threatened with a real danger, and were ready enough to look out for some arm strong enough to avert it.

And we all are threatened with a real danger by reason of the virus of the terrible disease of sin ; and though some won’t believe it, some are fleeing to the great Physician.

After the terrible year of the plague came another

fearful trouble,—the great fire of London,—which in the end, however, proved a blessing: burning down old nests of houses which harboured disease. But bursting out suddenly, and spreading with alarming rapidity among the old-fashioned wooden houses, every heart failed at the sight, and wondered where it would end. Was there any need to rouse the Londoners then to take all the precautions they could for the safety of life and property? Delay was dangerous, and the impending doom urged haste.

Are you certain that the fire of the Divine wrath will not fall upon you? and when “the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,” and “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved” (2 Pet. iii. 10, 12), do you know certainly that though you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you? (Isa. xliii. 2.) “If judgment first begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel?”

Early in the present century there was an alarm of a foreign invasion; but were the people to whom the rumour came to be found sleeping quietly, as if naught had been heard of danger? Their fear possibly magnified it; but if Napoleon Buonaparte dared to set foot in England, he should find a people prepared to resist him to the uttermost. Every one was willing to bear arms, or do what could be done to ensure the safety of their homes and country.

Beacon-fires were laid on every hill, so that if the danger really came the alarm might be given at once all through the land. Even, it was said, the women of the Devonshire villages, where it was thought possible the invader might try to land, were to turn out in their red cloaks, that in the distance they might be mistaken for soldiers. Napoleon Buonaparte never came: but a terrible enemy, as a strong man armed, is always watching for the opportunity to harass, and take possession of, and destroy the kingdom of Mansoul. Have you appealed to the Stronger than the Strong one: the Mighty one, upon whom help is laid to deliver you from his powerful attacks? Are you watching lest he take you by surprise? "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour."

Some twenty-five years ago there was an unsettled feeling abroad, and murmurs of discontent, and muttered threats were heard. This time it was no foreign foe that was feared, but disaffection at home. It was said that London was to be given over on a certain day to lawlessness and riot, on the occasion of a monster petition being presented to Parliament by the Chartists. We in the country held our breath, and prayed that wisdom might be given to the rulers of the land, that the collision might be avoided, and the threatened danger averted. And in London all sorts of precautions against surprise were being quietly carried out: for life and property were at

stake. Gentlemen were sworn in as special constables, to patrol the streets or wait in hiding ready for action on the first alarm, and the public buildings were barricaded. The day drew on; and when the dreaded 10th of April (1848) passed over without an outbreak, London breathed freely again.

And there are foes in our own hearts which, if not checked and kept under, will involve us in misery and ruin. Have we sought deliverance from ourselves: the plague of our own hearts? Have we said with Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and can we say with him,— "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory"? "Keep thy heart above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life."

Now think: these people feared the plague as a terrible judgment from God. They felt the fire was a real danger. They had heard so much of Napoleon Buonaparte, that they acted only on the fear of a possibility of his coming. The Londoners dreaded their city being in the hands of the Chartists. These things were all real to them: though I dare say there were some scoffers,—some that defied the fear, and laughed at the thought of the precautions, even in those days; but the most part believed, and acted on their belief. That is the point I want you to come to.

But how many around us have a certain sort of belief, and yet do not act upon it. They put it by. They have a sort of uncomfortable feeling, now and

then, that they are incurring danger, but they think it will do if by and bye they make an effort to escape. We read in the Acts that the people of those days hailed the preachers of the Gospel as men that had turned the world upside down ; and oftentimes when aroused by earnest appeals, the soul yet tries to persuade itself that those people who talk about religion, about God, about heaven, about hell, are just enthusiasts. They may talk, if I may go on in my own way. Paul was accused of being beside himself—mad,—because he pleaded earnestly in telling of the great salvation. He replied, "I am not mad, but speak forth words of truth and soberness." (Acts xxvi. 24, 25.) Surely, surely they are *mad* who follow a will-o'-the-wisp knowingly, until it leads them into an inextricable slough. Surely, surely we should esteem those mad who deliberately composed themselves to sleep, in the full knowledge that their house was in flames. Surely we should so think of those who were suffering sorely from sickness, and yet persisted in their refusal to take a medicine provided as a certain cure.

There was a dreadful punishment sometimes enforced in the convents of olden time. A nun who had transgressed rules, or incurred the displeasure of the Superior, was built alive into her grave, in a niche of the thick walls of those ancient houses. It might not have been so acutely suffering a death as some devised by the cruelty of man, but it must have been very terrible to see the wall rising hour

by hour, that was to shut out hope and liberty and light and life.

Now it strikes me that some around us are doing this for themselves: day by day adding a brick, building their own tomb, shutting themselves out of life and the light of heaven. Every sin indulged, every evil habit unchecked, every resolution broken, every conviction slighted, every gracious invitation refused, is each one as a brick laid on another, which shall shortly complete the wall of separation. Usually in the case of the nuns the builders would be hard, cruel men, but perhaps a compassionate one from time to time might dally and delay before putting in the last brick, in case deliverance might come for the poor captive. Oh, will you be less compassionate to yourselves? Add not brick to brick, while you can make one effort to spring over the barrier and be a free man once more.

You can't?

No: you cannot. But God can do that for you which you cannot do for yourself. Your limbs are paralysed; but the same voice which said to the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, "Rise and walk," can come with power to you. You can gasp, "Lord, save, or I perish." You can cry, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Ps. lxi. 2.) You can look as you are bidden, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none

else." (Isa. xlv. 22.) And listen to these gracious words, "Fury is not in Me: who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle?" (Not our briars and thorns, but those of the East, which form an almost impenetrable barrier, and wound most severely if anyone attempts to go through them; yet) "I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." (Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.) And this takes us to New Testament words, where we read of Him who set His face as a flint to go through all told or untold, conceivable and inconceivable obstacles, that He "hath broken down the middle wall of partition" (if one wall, all walls), for "He is our peace."

I was speaking once to a young man who acknowledged that he didn't very often read the Bible, and finding that his name was Cornelius, I asked him to begin regularly that night by reading the beautiful story of a seeking soul of his own name, in Acts x. I asked if he were travelling, and were told he was going on the wrong road, would he go on? No: but he should not like to turn back. What then? He should like to make a cut across. We were speaking in parables; but he had caught my meaning; and his reply was just that of the human heart, which will choose its own way, and does not like to submit to God's way. If possible it will climb up some other way. Witness the painful efforts of some really earnest souls to be good and

do good, so that they may recommend themselves to God and merit heaven. See Luther, the great German Reformer, on his knees, painfully raising himself up that stone staircase in Rome, worn, not by the feet but by the knees of hundreds of weary pilgrims who thought thus to obtain pardon and climb into heaven. Luther never got to the top. His progress was stayed by a whisper of the Spirit, bringing back to his remembrance the words, "the just shall live by faith." If that be true, there was no further need of this painful effort; and he sprang up joyfully to put the truth of God's Word against man's, and to proclaim it aloud, with ringing voice that all Europe might hear: "The just shall live by faith." For Jesus says, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John xi. 25, 26.) *Aye Believest thou this?* or, are you still, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, going about to establish your own righteousness, not willing to submit yourselves unto the righteousness of God"? (Rom. x. 3, 4.) "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And, He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John xiv. 6 and x. 9.) "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

To suit my companion's humour, I said that there was a hedge of his sins and unbelief, and of Satan's making up, between the path he was on and the

path he should be on, but that if he really had a mind to give his hand to God he might be over it there and then,—only he could not spring over it by himself if he rejected the promised help. He said he would like to go to heaven, *if there is such a place*, though he knew he wasn't ready. So I asked him why he said that: did he believe there was such a place as India? Yes, he did, for he had an uncle gone there,—he believed in his uncle, you see, but he did not believe in his Saviour,—and he wasn't ready, because he wasn't going on as I said he must to get there; but he was "very happy," very well satisfied with life as it was for him. So I told him I thought I must ask God to make him miserable: for if God made him sorry for sinning, He would make him happier than he had ever been in his life before. For if God, by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit works in us the godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance to salvation (2 Cor. vii. 10), He will also assuage the sorrow and pour into our hearts the joy of pardon, so that we may joyfully say,—“O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.” (Is. xii. 1.) “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” (Rom. v. 11.)

In the same village, as we left the church after the Communion,—such a little company, out of a congregation a great deal smaller than it ought to

have been, to judge by the size of the village, and the half-empty new church,—I noticed with pleasure a bright young mother, carrying away her little eight-months' old baby; so, as we were apparently going the same way, I remarked, how good it had been, and how glad I was to see her with it. She had half feared how it would like being put under another's care while she went to the Communion Table, but she had thought she could but try it. So I asked if she could not persuade more of her neighbours to try? as, naturally, a young babe is a difficulty in the way of the mother's getting to church, but as she was succeeding in the experiment it might perhaps influence others to make an effort; or could they not manage to take turns in caring for each others' children? She feared it would not be much use proposing it, as the people were not very neighbourly, and did not seem to care about going to church. For herself, she had been well brought up, and kindly watched over in service, and always liked going; but *the difference she had felt since she had known the Lord was wonderful*; she thought if people could but know what a difference it made in their lives they would want to have the happiness too. We had a little pleasant converse; and I was sorry when our roads diverged, as she had to take a path across the common to her home. But I went on my way refreshed by meeting a humble servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, striving to follow Him in all things, and finding such happiness in the way of holiness.

Ever the same testimony is borne by souls that have tasted that the Lord is gracious. I take a few sentences out of some letters, of which the writing is very bad, and the spelling so odd that I often have to consider for some little time what is really intended; but as I am thankful to know that the hearts that dictated them were taught of God, I don't mind that. "I have many things to thank you for: you have been the means of leading me to Jesus our blessed Saviour. I shall never forget the time you asked me if I should be afraid to die; or do you think you should go to heaven if you were to die to-night? My heart was full of pain and sorrow, I could not hardly answer you. I knew I should be afraid to die, and should never be with Jesus in heaven the way I was going on; so the Lord has led me to see the better way,—*the way of peace and happiness.*" "I hope I am in the right path that leadeth to that home where it will be as easy for us to do right as it is to do wrong here. Since the night you asked me if I never prayed,—that was the first night that I offered my heart to Christ, and now I am a child of God and a servant of Christ; and, with God's help, I pray that I may make a true and faithful servant. *I never was as happy as I am when serving Christ.*" "I hope J. don't forget to come to chapel now. If he does, I don't; for it is what I love now: that is the happiest time I have, for I know that I have a loving Saviour; to be His servant I will. God is love,—yea, He is love to me,

and has shown me the danger I was in." True indeed is it, "The life of a Christian is a life of happiness, peace, and comfort, which it is not in my feeble power to describe." True indeed is it that "The soul that can look up to God and say, '*Thou* hast put gladness in my heart,' has a spring of happiness which cannot be disturbed by outward circumstances." My friends have you it? or do you wish to have it? Can you sing—

"Happy in knowing Thee, my Lord and God :
Happy in finding Thee, my Treasure true :
Happy in following Thee through ill and good,—
In toiling for Thee, and in suffering too."

"Happily, happily,
Pass I along :
Eager to work for Thee,
Earnest and strong.
Life is for service true,
Life is for battle too,—
Life is for song."

VII.

TRIFLES AND TWO HEAPS.

“Despise not thou a small thing, either for evil or for good.”

“Commit thy trifles unto God, for to Him nothing is trivial.”

“The merest seeming trifle is ordered as the morning light.”

“What we can do for God is little or nothing, but we must do our *little nothings* for His glory.”



LITTLE child was known to be stricken for death; but the loving hearts that tended her trusted that there were yet years of usefulness before her. It was not to be. And one day, as she was lying on the sofa, she quietly said, “God is here,” and passed into His presence. God is here always. Could we but realize it what different lives we should live! Look at all the tossing and fretting and sore unrest,—all the vain wishing even of those who do love God.

Some people seem to spend their lives in wishing. Women, aye and men too, are wearily wishing for something different from what they have: they wish it would be always fine, as they feel brighter in the sunshine; they wish the house was larger, or better

supplied, or more comfortable; or that their income was larger. Husbands wish their wives were better managers, and more attentive to their comforts; wives wish their husbands were more thoughtful and kind; and both wish the children were not so troublesome. They wish they were better, that they could do better, but it seems no use trying to mend any of these matters: things have gone on as they are for so long it is just hopeless; and so with an occasional sigh over it, the miserable state of things is acquiesced in, as if there were really no help for it.

But is there not? The wish for something better is good, but we want something more than wishing. Wishing *only* never accomplished anything; but a firm purpose and a strong will can do a great deal. We must get ourselves mended if we are to mend others, and we must not sit down and think we shall never be any better, but just look round and see if there is any hope or any sign of help coming from any quarter. No doubt poor Jeremiah had wished to get out of the dungeon into which he had been so cruelly thrown, and where he was sinking in the mire, so he was quite ready when Ebed-melech appeared with the ropes and the old cast clouts, to put them under his arms, and let himself be drawn up. We are often, as it has been said, in the cage of circumstances; but if we make the best of them, we shall see enough through the bars to make us sing in our cage, while we keep it as clean as we can.

“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage,”

wrote one who was imprisoned in the Tower, yet bore a brave heart through it all. Paul and Silas sang in their prison, though they were in very uncomfortable circumstances, with sore bodies from the recent scourging and rough treatment they had received. *And the prisoners heard*, and were doubtless encouraged by the brave spirit that would not be daunted, or made to inquire the secret of being persecuted yet not cast down, in difficulty, but rejoicing always. If you look right against a bar of your prison of course you can see nothing clearly beyond it: as I have reminded you before, that a very small thing close to the eye will suffice to blot out a whole landscape from our view; and that our little moon, being so much nearer to us than the great sun, will hide that from us during an eclipse.

If we want to have bright homes, we must live in the sunshine, and keep a sunny bright spirit for the dark and cloudy days, so as to be able to bear disappointment bravely; we must be ready to put the ropes under our arms, and to accept any little help in the way. We must make the best of our circumstances, endeavouring to live as economically as possible if our means are small, but devising some little unexpected comfort for a pleasant surprise now and then. If we wish that the children be not so troublesome, we must be very careful to govern ourselves in dealing with them. It is hard, when you

look at it fairly, that the little ones should be called naughty, and slapped and pushed into the corner, when if we had only been more careful the contention would not have arisen, and we ourselves are the most to blame for losing our temper.

When they are gone shall we not be very sorry that we let the harsh words out, and in a moment of irritation complained they were in the way, wishing they were anywhere but troubling us. "A mother who was preparing some flour to bake into bread, left it for a few moments, when little Mary, with childish curiosity to see what it was, took hold of the dish, which fell to the floor, spilling the contents. The mother struck the child a severe blow, saying with anger, that she was always in the way. A fortnight afterwards little Mary sickened and died. On her death bed, while delirious, she asked her mother if there would be room for her among the angels: 'I was always in your way, mother: you had no room for little Mary! And shall I be in the angels' way?' The broken-hearted mother then felt no sacrifice too great could she have saved her child." There are more mothers methinks than that one, who break their children's hearts and their own in this way; and then, when it is too late, hunger for the pattering of the little feet, and the sound of the perpetual questioning voice of the little busy mind, which used so often to be greeted with: "How you do tease. There, child, be quiet,—I cannot be always answering your questions."

- “How doth death speak of our beloved
When it has laid them low ;
When it has set its hallowing touch
On speechless lip and brow ?
- “It clothes their every gift and grace
With radiance from the holiest place,
With light as from an angel’s face.
- “It sweeps their faults with heavy hand,
As sweeps the sea the trampled sand,
Till scarce the faintest print is scanned.
- “It takes each failing on our part
And brands it in upon the heart
With caustic power and cruel art.
- “The small neglect that may have pained,
A giant stature will have gained
When it can never be explained.
- “It shows our faults like fires at night ;
It sweeps their failings out of sight ;
It clothes their good in heavenly light.
- “O Christ, our Life ! foredate the work of Death,
And do this now !
Thou, who art Love, thus hallow our beloved,—
Not Death, but Thou !”

Should not this thought teach us to be more gentle and loving while the children are with us, and while we have the opportunity of showing kindness to one another.

It is well to teach children instant obedience ; it is well that they should learn to obey without questioning, without hesitation, trusting the love of the parent or friend who exacts obedience or gives a

command. A wise ruling of the infant mind saves many a contention as the will grows strong to assert itself. And in teaching them we have parable teaching from God as to His relation to us. God speaks of us as children, but as "rebellious children,—children in whom is no faith." How then shall we trust, how learn to obey? He has to say to us, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?" He appeals to us by the mouth of His prophets, as children who need to be taught to obey: "Obey, I beseech you, the word of the Lord." He tells us that "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth" the creatures He has made: so He "pitieth them that fear Him." "Who teacheth like Him?"

When we read of the heroic deeds of some of the great ones of the earth, who have made themselves a name among men, the heart swells with the longing desire also to do some great thing. In the history of God's people too, there is enough to stimulate a healthy ambition to have our name enrolled in the muster-roll of heaven's worthies. We read of David's mighty men, and of David's most honourable three; and when we read what insignificant men and feeble women have accomplished in far off lands, or in some difficult circumstances, we think, "Would that I could do it too: that I might be not only a mighty one, but one of the most honourable."

But God does not always count the things that we think the greatest as such. Is it a great or a little

thing to get a victory over self,—to be able to be unconcerned as to what the world thinks of us? In His Word it is written, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” (Prov. xvi. 32.) And when by His grace we have learnt this art, we shall be in a position to take any different work He may give us. Was it a great or a little thing just to stand in their place quietly, instead of bowing to the will of a heathen despot, as Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego did, saying, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us,” when before them was the most terrible death in the burning fiery furnace, heated “one seven times more than it was wont to be heated”? Was it a great or a little thing when those Hebrew youths agreed to refuse the King’s dainties, purposing in their hearts that they would not defile themselves with them; when Daniel went boldly and unflinchingly forward in his usual course of prayer, regardless of the snare laid for him by his enemies, and the cruel fate that awaited him in the lion’s den for his disregard of the King’s proclamation? “Dare to be a Daniel.”

You have heard of “Kitto’s Bible:” perhaps you have one. Do you know that that commentary was the work of a poor bricklayer’s lad, who falling from a ladder sustained such injuries that he became deaf, and for a time dumb, and was never able to do any handy work again. Being helped to study, he proved

himself a very persevering clever man, and has left us an example to make the best of our circumstances instead of only wishing they were different.

We cannot all do the great things, and are apt to forget that the little things required of us are necessary for keeping home, aye, and society, together, and that God has given them to us to do. I have spoken of this to you more than once, because it needs to be pressed in on our hearts. We cannot all go out with a warning cry to the impenitent, but we may recommend the Gospel at home: we may be "living epistles, known and read of all men;" as Daniel's upright conduct was a tacit reproach to those around when they could find no fault with him except his religion. We cannot set the world to rights, but we may order our hearts and our homes, obeying the word, "Be courteous, keep thy heart above all keeping," and saying, "Order my steps in Thy word." We cannot stop all the horrid words which come from other lips, but we can keep our own tongues quiet. We cannot make other people's tempers smooth, but we can avoid occasion of provocation. We cannot prevent other people from being and thinking wrong, but we can put before them a more excellent way. So easy to write and speak about it: so hard to do. Well let us recognise the hardness and the difficulties, and then we shall not forget to appeal to Him who has "commanded" our "strength." Cecil says, "Let me advise you to consider your case the more easy because it

is so difficult. Easy things we are ready to undertake ourselves, and find we cannot manage them; difficult things we are forced to leave, or commit them to God, and thus find them easy."

Little deeds of kindness there are still to be done. Do you remember the fable of the lion caught in a net, and a little mouse gnawing asunder the knots and getting him his liberty. Perhaps we might think the lion would not like to be beholden to a little mouse, but at any rate he would be glad to be free, and a little effort you see may be a great kindness.

" Little deeds of kindness,
Little words of love,
Make our earth an Eden
Like the heaven above."

We sometimes think we should like to see a little more consideration towards one another. I believe there is a great deal of kindly feeling amongst you, but I believe there might be more. "I always keep to myself, and don't interfere with other people; and I don't want any interference from them." Quite right! But the independent principle may be carried a little too far: and when sickness or sorrow comes, if we have completely shut up our hearts from those around us we may know what it is to pine for a little help and sympathy. In so many ways we might help each other if we had the tact, and the quick eye, and the ready hand, or only thought of it at the right moment. I heard the other day of a lady who was

not strong enough to do much to help others, or to work actively for her Lord and Master; but she could use her needle; and she thought it might be a great help to some anxious, overworked mothers who could not afford to pay for the making of their children's clothes, if she could lessen the great pile of needlework,—making and mending for a large little family, who will tear or outgrow their things,—that is often such a burden. So she offered to work for any who would accept her help; and while busy with her needle she, doubtless, had much pleasure in feeling that she was helping to lessen the care of another.

There are many burdens, and many will persist in carrying their own, not knowing the Great Burden-bearer, or the relief of casting first sins and then all cares upon Him. And many who do know Him will still tire themselves with trying to carry theirs, taking it up again even after they have cast it down at His feet. But we might make it easier for some to bear theirs. A kind sympathizing word would often be like a pad to save the shoulder or back from the weariness of the weight or the tightness of the strap. Dr. Chalmers' heap of misery is still as big in the world as ever, and bears a very large disproportion to his other heap of happiness; but each one of us, as he reminds us, should daily endeavour to reduce the disproportion. I think mothers who know what it is to have household cares, and who have learnt by experience how to get over and

through them, might help young and inexperienced housewives much, by a kindly hint and friendly oversight. Those who know what it is to have had a number of children making a great noise just when they are very weary, or have at length succeeded in soothing a sick little one to sleep, or those who have no children of their own, might think that a quiet half-hour would be a great gain to some weary neighbour, and might be obtained if they would take charge of some of those restless little pieces of humanity. Those who wish to go to church, and are often hindered because they daren't leave the children at home (albeit that I think they are very often left when the mother is gossiping, or must go shopping, or out to work); and can't take them for fear of disturbing the congregation, might surely devise some little plan by which neighbouring mothers could take it by turns to watch over the tinies, and so give others the opportunity of a walk on a week-day, or a service in God's house on a Sunday or week-night.

Fathers, who know what it is to struggle with the care of providing for a large family, might often give a helping hand to those who can't get on so well in the world as they do; not only with money, but with kind words of advice, or a recommendation to an employer. Those who know what fierce temptation means, can warn and succour those that are tempted and out of the way, and "make straight paths for their feet," if possible; or shield them from

the laugh or cutting word which makes a waverer wince. It is sad when one is made the occasion of another's fall. "So use your own as not to hurt another" is a maxim of law: the law is infringed if this is not attended to. But we often forget it in our way through life, making sad mistakes, and breaking God's law, "By love serve one another." How little we help one another, even when we have the desire to do it. How often we hinder even when we try to help. How often is one overborne in good resolutions by the carelessness and thoughtlessness of others, if not by their sin. It was a pitiful sight to see a man who had resisted entreaty to go into a public-house, taken in by main force. His friend (was he his *friend?*), crossing the street to where he stood, wavering in his purpose, but still making a show of resistance, and taking him by the shoulders to push him in. How different and far more pleasing this picture: "And Jonathan went to David, and strengthened his hand in God." (1 Sam. xxiii. 16.) Note that,—"*strengthened his hand in God.*" Can't you take some one thus by the hand, with warning, encouraging words?

I know many of you are very kind to one another, and if any real trouble comes there are speedy offers of help. But these need to be regulated, or they do not really help. And in sickness it makes all the difference who shakes up the pillow, and smoothes the sheet, or stirs the fire, and how it is done: as sometimes it is with such a hurricane of energy and

torrent of words and decision of purpose, that the sick person had rather be left alone than be made comfortable in that fashion; and that the fire should go out, rather than that all the fire-irons should come clattering down, and the kettle look as if it must tumble over to add to the commotion.

I know there are many acts of kindness done. Many a "gathering" made when the wages are paid, so that a sick mate's family might not feel the want of his week's earnings; many a drunken mother's child carefully tended because the mother proved herself incapable; many a drunken husband's heart-broken wife cheered by his being brought home earlier than she dared hope, or by some little attention to herself or the children. In many homes I have found an orphan child adopted, sometimes not even a relative, but cared for as tenderly as if it was a child of the house, because it was friendless, or its friends would only have brought it up to sin, when I knew that an additional mouth must bring a corresponding addition of anxiety and need of carefulness in making the weekly wage go as far as it would.

So I am only suggesting, that those who think they can do nothing may still find some way of taking a little from the great heap of misery in the world and putting it on to the little heap of happiness.

And you who love Jesus, think how He says, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another: as I have done unto you, so do ye;" and remember

that parable (Matt. xxv. 34) in which our Lord shows us that though justified solely and simply by faith,—“not of works, lest any man should boast,”—yet that faith must work by love; that if it is in our hearts it must show itself in our lives. Men see not the secret spring of the action, but they see the effect, and the cause and effect in God’s sight are so intimately connected that it is even as if they were the same thing. Take comfort from the thought, too, that Jesus counts the good works and kind deeds as done unto Himself: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” And notice, too, that slights done or kindnesses omitted are also counted as to Himself: “Why persecutest thou *Me*?” “Ye did it not to *Me*.” So let us be very careful in this matter to “walk *worthy* of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, *increasing in the knowledge of God*” (Col. i. 10); so that however lowly our sphere, or however little we may seem to be able to show our gratitude to Him who has done so much for us, yet with a quick eye and ready heart and hand we may seize little opportunities, that at last it may be our joy to hear those precious words of commendation: “Faithful in a very little, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom.”

THE STRANGER AND HIS FRIEND.

“A poor way-faring man of grief
Hath often crossed me on my way,
Who sued so humbly for relief
That I could never say Him nay.
I had not power to ask His name ;
Whither He went, or whence He came :
Yet there was something in His eye
That won my love, I knew not why.

“Once when my scanty meal was spread
He entered : not a word He spake,—
Just famishing for want of bread.
I gave Him all,—He blessed it, brake,
And ate,—but gave me part again :
Mine was an angel’s portion then ;
For while I sped with eager haste
That crust was manna to my taste.

“I spied Him where a fountain burst
Clear from a rock : His strength was gone :
The heedless water mocked His thirst,—
He heard it, saw it hurrying on.
I ran to raise the sufferer up :
Thrice from the stream He drained my cup,
Dipt, and returned it running o’er :
I drank, and never thirsted more.

“’Twas night : the floods were out, it blew
A winter hurricane aloof :
I heard His voice abroad, and flew
To bid Him welcome to my roof :
I warmed, I fed, I cheered my guest,
Laid Him on my own couch to rest ;
Then made the earth my bed, and seemed
In Eden’s garden while I dreamed.

“Striped, beaten, wounded nigh to death,
I found Him by the highway side :
I roused His pulse, brought back His breath,
Revived His spirit, and supplied
Wine, oil, refreshment : He was healed.
I had myself a wound concealed ;
But from that hour forgot the smart,
And peace bound up my broken heart.

“In prison I saw Him next, condemned
To meet a traitor’s doom at morn :
The tide of lying lips I stemmed,
And honoured Him midst shame and scorn.
My friendship’s utmost zeal to try,
He asked if I for Him would die ?
The flesh was weak, my blood ran chill,
But the free spirit cried,—I will !

“Then in a moment to my view
The stranger started from disguise :
The tokens in His hands I knew,—
My Saviour stood before my eyes !
He spake, and my poor name He named :
‘Of Me thou has not been ashamed,
These deeds shall thy memorial be :
Fear not, thou didst them unto Me.’”

J. MONTGOMERY.

VIII.

LIVING TO GOD
AND FAIR-WEATHER PRAYERS.

“ Not *many* lives, but only *one* have we,—
One, only one ;
How sacred should that one life ever be,
That narrow span !
Day after day filled up with blessed toil ;
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.”

“ Prayer is the key that shutteth in the night and openeth the gates of the morning.—Teach us to live for Thee on earth, fit us to live with thee in heaven.”

“ **W**IST ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ?” Do you remember, what Jesus said to the Jews ?—“ Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” (John viii. 44.) With an angry disclaimer they said Abraham was their father, and God was their Father ; but Jesus goes to the root and truth of the matter, and tells them that their lives testified against them. “ Ye do the deeds of your father :” the children of the Wicked One cannot please God. You know God asks, “ If I be a Father, where is my honour ?

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me." And though those Old Testament Jews asked, "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" their sin was brought home to them. Are there not many now-a-days just following those Jews, and robbing God of His due,—of His day? Look abroad, and get an answer to these questions. Look into your own hearts, and get it there.

Look abroad and see where is His honour. Just a few seeking after God, if haply they may find Him; just a few blindly adoring the God of nature; just a few striving to walk uprightly and honourably in the sight of the world; just a few out of the mass rejoicing in the knowledge of God in Christ, and lovingly yielding Him true service such as He loves. But what are they among so many? Do you remember the question of the disciples, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" and how it was turned in on their own hearts by their wise Teacher and Lord? He was ever ready to answer the questions and solve the difficulties of an honest heart desiring with full purpose to get at the truth; but He gave no encouragement to "foolish questions" or curious speculations: so instead of answering this question He made it the text of a sermon. Be you in earnest: religion is a personal thing. It matters not so much how many will be saved as that some will be, and the most important thing of all is to see whether you will be among the number. Our Lord puts it plainly before us that there will be many mistakes,

many sore disappointments in "that day." Are we *certain* we are making no mistake,—that we are providing against such a disappointment? There is often a temptation to busy ourselves with the things of others,—to be looking on their matters, warning them,—while all the time perhaps our own light is burning very low, or our lamp well nigh gone out for want of a fresh supply of oil, our feet slipping and stumbling because we are not walking warily, trusting to our Guide. "Lord are there few that be saved," *and shall I be one?* "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." Strive therefore.

"Many shall *seek*: do you *strive!* For wishing is one thing, and *willing* is another, and *doing* is yet another. And in regard to entrance into Christ's kingdom, our *doing* is trusting Him who has *done* all for us." This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

I have spoken to you often about God's day. Did you ever notice that the fourth commandment is the only one which begins with the word *Remember?* Is it that the other things which we are told,—Thou shalt, and, Thou shalt not—do, are more plain to our apprehension? We know the outlines of our duty towards God and our neighbour; and some of us just manage to keep within the lines; and some of us would be very much ashamed if we were convicted of crossing them. But the Sabbath day,—we are so tempted to forget it is God's rest-day given to us; and so He reminds us that we are not to count that our own

which is His. It is a tender reminder too, because He so well knows what is best for us; and if we foolishly crowd seven day's work into the week, it is a known fact that we shorten our lives in proportion.

Do you remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? or do you remember it only as a holiday from work,—a day on which you mean to make some excursion to the sea-side, or some expedition to see your friends: a day on which you can lie in bed as long as you please?

“ Make preparation for this hallowed guest,
Nor let it find thee with thy week-day cares
All clustered round thy home. It is God's rest!
Should it not then be thine?

. “ Early arise
To give attendance, lest His golden robe
Of morning light shine on thy slumbrous eyes
Unheeded; lest He greet thy home
With, ‘ Peace I bring to thee,’ yet none reply!
The temple gates of God, thy Father, stand
All open wide: there seek the hallowed way,
Following the footsteps of the little band
That walk His courts, to keep an holy day.
The Saviour's hands
Are full of Sabbath blessings, only say
Which shall be thine.”

“ And at evening let me say,
I have walked with God to-day.”

When I was staying in the country once, I was very sorry to see the church so empty, and Sunday after Sunday, as I crossed the common, to come upon a knot of men and boys, onlookers and sharers in

the game of cricket being played on a levelled sward. I used to have a little talk with them from time to time. The village policeman said it ought to be put a stop to. Some of them said it was no worse than the Squire taking his horses and men out to church, when he was within easy distance of it. Others said it was better than sitting drinking in the public-house. Perhaps it was a shade better: but I shrewdly suspect that the public-house was rather too near to the end of the game. We failed to convince each other; and unless they have learnt better lessons by this time, I suppose they play there still.

“Our master thinks nowt about Sunday and those things,” was the reply, when I asked a man in another country village, if he could not do his horses a little earlier, and so arrange the necessary work of attending to the dumb creatures under his care that he need not be hindered in going to church at least once a day. So the master not remembering, put an excuse and a stumbling-block in the man’s way.

Stand aside from the bustle of the world for a moment, and ask yourselves,—What do our lives say? Whose mark is on them, God’s or the devil’s? Whose mark is on the ways of the world, whose mark is on its pleasures, whose mark is on its business? Whose mark is on my work? Is it the Heavenly Father’s business that is so eagerly taken up, or is it the devil’s work that people are doing? “The foundation of the Lord standeth sure,” having this

seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are His:" this for the comfort of those with whom "the secret of the Lord" is,—the consciousness of it implanted by the Holy Spirit.—"And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity:" this for the satisfaction of those around, who mark the fruits springing from the root of faith and love in the heart. Are we living to God?

"What an example Christ sets before us: 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.' If I might so say, He was a miser of the moments, and carefully husbanding and garnering up every capacity and every opportunity, He toiled with the toil of a man who has a task before him that must be done when the clock strikes six, and who sees the hands move over the dial, and by every glance that he casts at it is stimulated to intenser service and harder toil. Christ felt that impulse to service which we all ought to feel, 'The night cometh,' let me fill my day with work. So we have the plain lesson, task all your capacity and use every minute in doing the thing which is plainly set before you to do; and that everything was equally and directly referred to His Father's will. He sends us into the world not to do our own will, but to do the will of Him that sent us. There is a fatal monotony in all our toils, a terrible amount of hard drudgery in them all: and yet we may make all our common-place drudgery great and wondrous, and fair, and full of help and profit to our

souls, if over it all,—our shops, our desks, our ledgers, our studies, our kitchens, our nurseries,—we write, ‘My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.’ We may bring the greatest principles to bear upon the smallest duties.”

Yes, if we have the mind of Christ and learn from Him, as “His labour did not break His fellowship with God; He was ever in the secret place of the Most High, even while He was in the midst of crowds.” Just as we know an article of solid silver by finding on it the mark of the mint, and know that it has been to the Assay office to be stamped with the Lion in proof of its genuineness; so is the King’s mark to be set on our lives and Holiness stamped on our brow. Romaine says, “The way to live *for* Jesus is to live *on* Him,” and if our lives are consecrated lives we shall bring honour to Him who says, “Be ye holy for I am holy.” Oh, what a blessed day will that be when everything is manifestly consecrated to the service of the Lord; that day when “every pot shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts,” and all the common things in every-day life shall be used to His glory; that day “when there shall be even upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord.” I fancy there won’t be any “bearing reins” then to torment the poor horses; nor any swearing at them because “they are so aggravating, they make you say what you don’t mean.”

“And all men live unto Him.” If this were true in its highest, happiest sense, what a paradise this

world would be! Alas, alas, look round, and see the insubordination and contempt of those in authority! The lawlessness and contempt of God's Word and day; the selfishness, the brutal kicking of inoffensive victims, the easily ruffled temper, the harsh words and hasty speech, the slothfulness and waste of time and golden opportunities, the sinful waste of life and substance in riotous living, or merely in carelessness and indifference; with only here and there one and another striving to live a holy life and to set themselves against all these things. Can it be that all men live unto God? It is an awful thought that God will get Himself glory out of all our lives. If they are not joyfully yielded up to Him in reasonable service, He will make His great power to be known in the disposal of them; for "He hath made all things for Himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil."

And if we are really wishing to do our heavenly Father's will, we sometimes are met with a difficulty of our laggard or distrusting hearts: it would be so easy to do it in other circumstances, but it seems impossible now! Yes, it would be very easy to be very loving and unselfish if every one else was so; if we met with nothing but love and tenderness and consideration, and no harsh words or unkind suspicions roused our temper. It would be very easy to go to church, to keep Sunday well, if every one else did. If there were no shops or tea gardens open, no excursion trains running; if there were no fear of

man to hinder with false shame about our clothes not being so good as other people's or as good as we should like; if the children were not so troublesome, and all went smoothly. It would be an extremely easy thing to keep out of the public-house if there were no public-houses to go into. "Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him?" asks the prophet Amos (iii. 5). To keep out of debt, if those who owe us money were always just to pay, and we always had the money to pay at once for any purchase. It would be very easy to walk steadily and safely, and without encountering dirt or danger, if the road was always in thorough order and repair.

But as the road is rough the more need for walking carefully, the more need for the cry, "Hold up my goings in Thy path, that my footsteps slip not." As it is a wicked world, all the more need to listen to the benediction (Rev. xvi. 15), "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments;" and to plead His prayer "Who gave Himself for us that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4; John xvii. 15): "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." As our clothes may not be what we wish, all the more need to remember the words, "Be clothed with humility;" and to ask for the white raiment, that we may be clothed, and that we may *rejoice* in being clothed with the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness. If we are often wishing for

a little more money, all the more reason to ask of Him the gold tried in the fire, that we may be rich. If there are temptations, all the more need to know Him who "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and to cry, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And if people are selfish and unloving, all the more need to remember the exhortation: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Do you remember that verse, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem"? It came very strongly before me the other day, when I was thinking of the spirit of prayer that is being poured out on God's people. It is a call, a promise, and an exhortation by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah (lii. 1) to the Jewish Church, which we may take to ourselves. There is the strength for us; we have only to gird ourselves with it and be ready for the conflict: there are the beautiful garments; we have only to put them on,—as Paul says, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ;" and then there is the direction, "Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down." "Your strength is to sit still," but "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." So we may ask Him to set us free from all hindrances, and to enable us to shake off all that would impede our progress or defile our robes.

I have often said, God never tells us to do anything

without giving us the power to do it. Every precept is wrapped up in a promise, and we shall find many a precept implied in the promises. It is true we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, but the miracles of Christ teach us not to despair on that account. Could any of those He healed have done the thing He bid them, unless He had given them the power? Whether it were to stretch out the withered limb, or to spring from a couch with an impotent body, or to speak with hitherto dumb lips, or to come forth from the very tomb.

So now it is Satan's hindrance to make the slothful man hide his hand in his bosom, and imagine he cannot pluck it out to take hold of God and His covenant. It is Satan's hindrance to keep us lying down in the dust, instead of springing up joyfully to use the power there is for us in Christ Jesus, in running the way of His commandments, when He has set our hearts at liberty. It is his device to hinder, that we send not forth the happy notes of song "to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood;" "I will praise Thee, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." It is Satan's device that we, being bound hand and foot with grave clothes, hesitate to come forth into the sunshine at the voice of Jesus.

"Do you believe there is such a being?" I was asked one Sunday afternoon, when I had been speaking of our great adversary; having, as it seemed by

chance, come across a young man who had craved rest and refreshment in a cottage, where at that hour I usually paid a little visit. He had lost his way in a long Sunday ramble, which, cooped up as he was all the week, he thought quite as good as going to church, with the wrong motives people so often go from,—the desire to display their dress, to hear a fine discourse, or because others go, etc. I agreed with him that those were wrong motives, and we had a long and interesting talk about many things,—God's day, God's ways; and as I told him there was no *chance* with God, I trusted we had been allowed to use this little opportunity rightly. He said afterwards that he should not forget our talk. He was one who thought we could rule ourselves: he had always done so. He saw no reason why we should not keep our bodies in subjection,—why we should not walk uprightly, and kindly, and truly with our fellow-men. That was his religion, and the rest must take care of itself. And that, I fear, is the religion of very many. He could not understand God's character, nor why He allowed things to go on as they do: if He is the kind beneficent Being we are taught to believe, why not put a stop to the terrible wars which break out now and again. When by the lifting of a finger, so to speak, He could avert the danger, why allow those two trains to rush into each other, crushing out the life and maiming the bodies of so many (referring to a recent terrible accident)? I told him, as I have so often told you,

that the wickedness and trouble we see around, and the suggestions to sin that come to our own hearts, prove surely the existence and malignity of that old serpent the devil; and that God giveth not account of any of His matters. Only we may be quite sure of this,—that there is a wise and loving purpose behind the withholding of His interference; “For the wisdom of the Lord is great, and He is mighty in power and beholdeth all things, and His eyes are upon them that fear Him; and He knoweth every work of man, neither hath He given any man licence to sin;” and “in the congregation of the ungodly shall a fire be kindled, and in a rebellious nation wrath is set on fire.”

“Say your prayers in fair weather,” shouted a captain into a sailor’s ear, in the midst of an awful storm. The man was terrified at the fury of the elements, and thinking they must be lost, he had flung himself on his knees in the cabin to cry for mercy, instead of taking his part in doing what could be done to save the ship. Through God’s goodness they weathered the storm, and by God’s grace the man saw the force of the captain’s words, and began not only to *say* his prayers in fair weather, but to pour out his heart before Him who “maketh the storm a calm,” and to bless Him who, by the captain’s words, had given him warning. (Psalm xvi. 8; Prayer-book ver.) So that “having fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him,” and having “a sure anchor,” he could be glad and quiet, knowing that

through cloud and sunshine, fair weather and storms, "so He bringeth unto the desired haven." (Psalm cvii. 29, 30.) "Say your prayers in fair weather," and you will have a Friend to turn to when the storm comes on.

Some time ago I sent you a message. I wonder how many heeded it. I trust that those of you who do love God are going on unto perfection, crying out daily,—

"Nearer, my God, to Thee : nearer to Thee !"

I asked you, for one thing, about praying. I wonder who has begun family prayer since then! I wish you saw the help and comfort of it. I have known some servants, who often do not care for being cared for, yet seem to feel it is a good thing to get into a place where there is family prayer, and that it is a sort of guarantee for more regularity and order than is found in some households. It seems like a band to keep a family together: we cannot live very far apart from one another in coldness or unkindness, when we meet daily to read out of the same Book, and to bend the knee together before the great God and Father of all, telling out the hopes and fears and wants of all.

I know it would be next to impossible in many cases to have family prayer in the morning. So often the father, living at a distance from his work, has to start off very early, and does not come back to breakfast. But there need be no hindrance in

the evening: and a little prayer together, and a chapter from God's Book, and, if you are as fond of singing as "Zachary Dykes," a nice hymn, would be a soothing refreshment after the fatigue and friction of the day. Where all breakfast together, if all was *quite ready* at the appointed time, so that there was no waste of the precious moments of the short time allowed, three or four minutes might surely be spared for the exercise. There is so much in bringing the children up to expect it. I know it requires an effort to begin: and I know many who feel it to be right, who are too shy of one another to make that effort; too shy even to *kneel down* and pray quietly alone, though they say they pray in their hearts. There is a story in "Toiling in Rowing," about a family prayer book found in a dead man's pocket, "worn out with hope,"—not with use,—as he had never had the courage to produce it in his family. The longer we put off a thing we know to be right, the harder do we find it to do; and yet when once we have made the effort, we often find it was not nearly so hard as we expected.

I was pleased and touched to hear a bright little boy of three or four, to whom I had given a basin of broth at my own house, ask for God's blessing on it before he touched it; and I have many times felt glad to see your children say their grace before or after a meal. But how is it that you often forget it yourselves, and that, though you teach them to say their prayers when they are little, they often

have to wonder *why*, as you do not kneel down before them to say your own? Many are hindered too by the idea that it is making a profession, and more will be expected of them, and they are not good enough for it; forgetting that the more we read God's Word to learn His will, and the more we pray to Him, the more we shall be able quietly to "profess a good profession before many witnesses." Truly we need to pray for deliverance from "the fear of man," which assails us in so many ways, and indeed "bringeth a snare."

We read a good deal in the Bible about family religion, and we have many pictures of the patriarchs setting up their family altars. And if we *singly* desire to love God we shall *collectively* strive that the household be ordered as He would have it. If one of the heads is living for God and the other is not, of course there is a great difficulty; but by "patient continuance in well doing," the difficulties may be smoothed away. I always grieve to see a Family Bible,—often a wedding gift,—belying its name, and looking as if it was never moved, either from the careful wrappings in which it is shrouded, or from the dust collected on it, which made John Wesley say people wrote their own damnation on their dusty Bibles.

Where the father has to start early, the mother might gather the little ones together to thank God for the mercies of the night, and to ask that the father may be kept from accident at his work, and

brought safe home again; and all be guided and guarded through the day. And he surely would have time for a few verses to help him on his way; or only a glance at the Sheet Almanac, with which I and others supply our friends, not only that they may know what day of the month it is, but that they may have a nice thought from God's Word, before they go forth to their work and to their labour till the evening. It is a very great thing to start out with something to think about. Just as it is much safer to go into infection or bad air, if needs be, after a good meal, so it is safer to go out into the bad air of the world, to encounter the taint of sin's infection, with our souls replenished by feeding on the bread of life. Satan will soon enough try to put the good out of our heads by bad thoughts, but if our vessel is full already it cannot hold any more. If the heart is stored with texts, they are like arrows to hurl at Satan's insinuations, and we are more likely to possess our souls in peace.

When I was reminding you of God's advice to us to remember the Sabbath day, my thoughts ran on to the use of that word, *Remember*. It is a good way to make a Scripture study by taking a word as a peg, "a nail in a sure place," to hang on all the texts in which it is used, and to see their connection and disconnection. So now I will remind you of a few places where we are enjoined to *remember*, or are told God does or does not remember, and you can find many more for yourselves.

The book of Deuteronomy is a book of reminder. In it the Jews of old were admonished, in words which are as good for us now, "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee in the wilderness; that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh." (Deut. viii. 2; xvi. 12; vii. 18.) What a chapter would our lives be if we sat down and patiently remembered all the way God has led us; all His mercy to us from our youth up; all the times we have wandered; all the times He has watched over us, borne with us and brought us back; all the dangers we have escaped, all the deliverances He has accomplished for us!

Sometimes a word or association brings up to our recollection a whole chain of circumstances which we had forgotten, or were trying to forget, laying our whole lives bare before us, like the lightning flash breaking in on the inky darkness and revealing the whole face of the country; and, as has happened before now, showing to a traveller that in the darkness he had wandered to the edge of a precipice, and but for that revealing flash must have met his doom. We seem to hear the warning word, "Son, remember. Remember Lot's wife:" and well for us that we hear it in life; and well for us if we turn from the edge of the precipice saying, "I do remember my faults this day" (Gen. xli. 9); as David did when the message of the Lord, "Thou art the man," struck in on his heart, and he said, "I have

sinned." No sooner were the words uttered than he was comforted by the assurance of pardoning mercy: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin."

"He remembered us in our low estate" (Psalm cxxxvi. 23), but alas for our careless hearts, "Yet did not he remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Gen. xl. 23), is too true of us and our Lord. We grow cold in our love, and lax in our service, and unwatchful in our walk, when we think we have really escaped the danger, and are surely in the right way and shall not wander again. Speaking of His erring children, He says (Jer. xxxi. 20), "I do earnestly remember him still," and the warning comes, "Remember from whence thou art fallen: repent, hold fast." (Rev. ii. 5; iii. 3.) How sweet then, first and last, and all the way through the journey, to know that we may put Him in remembrance in so many of the Psalmist's prayers (Psalm xxv. 6, 7; lxxix. 8, etc.), and plead with Him His own words (Is. xliii. 25, 26): "I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins," echoed by Jeremiah (xxx. 34) in the new covenant, and repeated again for "us upon whom the ends of the world are come" (Heb. viii. 12): "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Nehemiah cries out, "Remember me, O my God, for good." (xiii. 31.) The Psalmist breaks forth into longing: "Remember me with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy chosen; O visit me with Thy salvation." (cvi. 4.) The thief hanging on the

cross by the side of Jesus whispers with his dying breath, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom." (Luke xxiii. 42.)

Such a little exercise as this we should often find very helpful; taking our morning text as a sort of key-note for the thoughts of the day. And as in music, having the key-note, we can make the chord and can lead off into various harmonies making sweet music, but ever coming back to the key-note to steal away again on a different harmony; so we shall find never-ending melody and harmony in God's truth; and like the refrain of an old song, which floats through the memory or rises to the lips, if we love it, it will be ever making sweet music for us, which we can hear spite of the din and clang that is going on around us.

"There are in this loud streaming tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime,
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart;
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

Shall this be true of you and me?

Shall God hear the melody in our hearts, and those around catch the murmur, as we cannot choose but sing, though our voice may not be very strong or well trained? I have sometimes thought how well practised that ear must be, and how acute that

sense of hearing, that in a very large orchestra of a number of performers can detect the one wrong note of the one careless performer, that makes a discord and disturbs the harmony and may put the others out; or the false chords that some one will persist in because they wish to improve upon the part given them to play, or because perhaps they have lost their place and think it does not matter much, as they won't be heard among so many; and which also singles out for encouragement the sweet voice and painstaking perseverance of some timid performer, even though there may be a few mistakes in the performance.

Is not this world something like a number of people practising their parts for a grand concert? God has given a beautiful oratorio to be practised for heaven; but some of us are so careless, and some of us are so ignorant, that instead of all sweet sounds there are many discords and much confusion, and it seems as if the piece never could be played right. Some will try to play a different tune, or sing some words of their own composing; some will play as they choose, and invent for themselves as they go; some hold the instruments in their hands, and are too idle to play themselves, or are occupied with listening to the others; and some will put off learning their part, declaring there is time enough yet for them to learn it, and if they don't know it, it must be overlooked; or they will sit by some one who knows it well, and so they will not be found out.

And some are bent diligently on learning their part, and playing or singing it as well as they can, looking to the guiding eye of the leader, the Master of the assembly, that they may not lose the time, or may be encouraged or warned from time to time by his glance of approval or dissatisfaction.

God is listening to all this. He has given us a part to play and a song to learn, and He knows how we are doing it. We sometimes think we are lost in a crowd, and cover ourselves up with a sort of comfort in this, that it does not matter how we play our part in the world,—what we do or what we say; whether we are doing our best to help the harmony, or whether we are doing our worst in making a discord by false jarring notes. And some feeble faint-hearted one is rather troubled by the feeling of being overlooked, of being lost in a crowd, till the thought comes, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." When Jesus was upon earth the children's crying "Hosanna" sorely displeased the chief priests and scribes, and they turned to Him with the inquiry, "Hearest Thou what these say?" Did he not hear? "Yea," was His reply, "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" Yea, He tells us the sound of those infant voices was sweet music in His ears: doubly sweet possibly, because they rang clear above the mutterings of discontent and unbelief. And here is an encouragement to the feeblest and youngest in the household of faith: the

Lord hears the weakest cry, and honours the humblest efforts to show forth His praise. Others may doubt if we are singing in tune, or whether we shall ever learn the song, or ever "play well upon an instrument" God may have put in our hands, but He knows,—He hears. And if there is but little voice, if we "make melody in our hearts" He hears the heart music and accepts it, saying, "Inasmuch as it was in thine heart."

"The feeblest lamb amidst the flock
Shall own the Shepherd's care."

"The lamb on whom none else discern Thy sign
Thou carriest in Thy bosom day by day."

"Oh give me, Lord, my golden harp,
And tune my broken voice ;
That I may sing of troubles sharp
Exchanged for endless joys."

Yes: God is listening. "The Lord hearkened and heard." And this is true of evil as well as of good. It is a terrible thought brought home to the rash, idle, wicked speaker; but a blessed thought to all who are trying to hear and speak rightly, that He hears each word spoken by each one, just as if that one were all by himself in the world, speaking only for God's ear. Above all the din and roar and bustle of the world He hears, whether the words are meant for His hearing or not: hears to praise, hears to blame, hears to the acceptance or the shame of the speaker. And by and bye those who have been "wicked and slothful servants," caring little whether

they learn to do their part well or not, whether they help or hinder in the harmony God would have His creatures learn, and sheltering themselves under the thought that they are lost in a crowd and it does not matter if their voice is mute or discordant, will find that their conduct has been noticed, and that alone, each one for himself, every one of us shall have to give account for himself to God.

“All alone, so heaven has willed, we die.”

All alone we must stand “before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done.” Shall it be *all alone*, friends? No human friend can speak for us or take our part, but we need not be all alone if we can say, “I know whom I have believed. Naught can separate me from the love of Christ, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” If He has heard us whisper the first broken notes of the new song *here*, we know He will let us join the chorus *there*, where throughout eternity there will not be one false note or faltering tongue to mar the harmony of heaven.

IX.

A BAG WITH HOLES.

“ My Lord a treasure gave, of long bright years,
And bade me spend it well : when He appears,
How shall I reckoning make, who day by day
Have thrown in petty sums the whole away,
And dare not what I therewith bought display ?

“ Moments were coins of such a small amount,
One idly spent seemed naught in the account ;
So one by one they went : the freshest ore
Expended first ; the scant and rusted store
Death may break through and steal, next morn before.”



SHORT time ago, while waiting at a railway station for a late train, I was interested in overhearing the conversation of a knot of men going home after their week's work, early on a Saturday afternoon. They were well posted up in the news of the day, which they had managed to digest in their dinner-hour, and their remarks were spiced with a good deal of shrewdness. Ours is a free country, and every man thinks himself at liberty to say what he pleases, so politics and persons were pretty freely handled. I don't fancy

they quite approved of the suggested punishment for the brutal kicking assaults now in fashion. I was rather glad to hear that they saw through some of those agitators, who professing to be the working-man's friends are really his enemies. But I was very sorry they moved away with an oath to take their seats in the train, which, as they observed, had better have been advertised half-an-hour later than it was.

There is no doubt about it that many things might and ought to be different, and if you could only see where the line is to be drawn, and what you ought patiently to submit to, and what you ought to set your face against, and rise up and say "I will not bear that," it would be a step in the right direction. I was glad to see lately that the system of "*footing*" was to be abolished in a large establishment: the men there are on the right track I hope.

I have reminded you before of the builders in Nehemiah's days who didn't wander about all over the city to do a little here and a little there, and put a stone straight here and lay a timber there, and then say nothing was or could be done, because the work was so great; there was so much to do, it was impossible for the "feeble Jews," as their enemies called them, to overtake it. But they each took the piece that came to hand, and worked, "every man over against his own house." We hand the saying down that "There is something rotten in the state of Denmark;" and it seems

sometimes that to put things to rights we must pull everything to pieces and begin all over again. Yes: so we must begin all over again, but it must be with ourselves; so, as we cannot set out to put the world to rights, let us each take in hand that which falls to our lot, saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do," even in the most trivial concerns of our daily life; each keep our hearts by putting them into God's keeping; each study to be quiet and do our own business; each stand in our own place, watching daily at the gates of wisdom, waiting at the posts of her doors among the blessed ones who hear the voice of the heavenly instructor. (Prov. viii. 34.)

Just look at your homes, too many of them. You ought not to submit to live in them, and you need not, if you set about it in the right way to get an alteration. For think only of the money expended in keeping up those terrible "man traps" you see at the corner of nearly every street, and say would it not set you all in comfort if it were spent in your homes instead? In a ten minutes' walk I counted, some years ago, twelve public houses, and I think by walking a very little further I could have counted fifty. I used to be appalled at the number, and I remember stopping to groan with indignation and sorrow when one day I saw another fast preparing for opening, at the corner of a new row of houses. The houses were good; but the neighbourhood was wretched in the extreme, and these "spiders' webs"

to catch unwary souls afflicted me. I used to see them so often full, and could only echo the wish of many wives "that beer was fifteen shillings and a guinea a quart," as then it would hardly be so freely indulged in, and there would be a little more chance of the money now squandered being expended in good wholesome food, or household comforts.

Some of you think that it does not matter to have a "break-out" now and then if you usually maintain a respectable appearance, or if your earnings will allow it without any very great detriment to the comforts of the home; but what does it show? That you are intensely selfish, to say the least of it, and also that the devil still holds you captive at his will.

A young wife carrying an infant, with horror on her white face, rushed in one day where I was sitting, and flinging her baby into the woman's arms, said, "Take care of the children. He has come home again mad with the drink, and I don't know what he will do next!" There was no doubt about who the *he* was, and that already there had been a terrible scuffle. Her hair was all down her back, and her husband had kicked one of the children downstairs. You have seen such sights yourselves, too often, alas! I was on my way to that home. It was a tidy one, for the man could earn large money, and prided himself on keeping his home all right. But I fancy that often when his delicate wife was ill she could have well done with a few

comforts which were swallowed up in these drinking bouts. The wife I really hoped was in earnest to live rightly, and I trust was being led to the Light: doubtless this sorrow in her path made her more long for the rest of knowing Him who is the Friend of sinners, and can have compassion on the broken-hearted. I hesitated about going on then, and those about entreated me not; but as I had to pass the garden to pay my next visit, I said I should be guided what to do, and the neighbour considerably opened her door so that I could slip in out of the way if necessary. Seeing me coming the man came out and leant over the railings, expecting a talk. I saw it was not the time to hope to do much good; but as he *would* talk, I prayed that some word might take effect. He glared down on me, and I felt as if I must keep my eye fixed on him as we do to cow a wild beast. I said I would come another day. He would be delighted to see me to-morrow. "To-morrow," I said; and in the course of the Sunday afternoon I wended my way there. But he was too ashamed to meet me, and was gone out. He was a shrewd, clever sort of man, and knew the Bible by heart he said, when I saw him another time; but now he did not care to read it. Doubtless he felt it condemned him. The demon of drink possessed him, and when sober he covered the shame he felt with a defiant manner, asserting that he should do as he pleased with his own, forgetting that only God can say that, and that we are not our own, and that

our time and money and life are only lent to us to be used for One who will call us to give an account of our stewardship.

One said to me, "Company does it, and then the devil tempts us, and gets us under his thumb." Think of any one owing to such bondage. I was paying a visit one day to another sad wife, when her husband came in much the worse for drink. He said he wanted me to talk to him. I told him I would when he was perfectly sober. He said he wanted to go to church, *but he could not*. Evidently, again, such a bond-slave of Satan; "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage." His wife said he had first got tipsy on the birth of their first baby,—seventeen years before, for joy, he said,—and she had told him he had lit a spark in his throat which would never be quenched.

You may think I say a great deal about the drink; but I have seen so much misery from it, and it is such a crying evil, and the source of so much evil, that I can't help trying to rouse you to try to help one another in this matter.

It is an awful sum that is wasted in England annually. I know that when sympathy is aroused by some colliery accident, or great fire, or famine, the money comes in freely: but we often hear that there is no money for anything; no money when there is some great need for it to help forward God's work, and we sigh to think of the money thrown away carelessly, with a lavish hand, without a

thought. Yes: even the pence of the working-man would make a respectable sum at the end of the year. They are but *littles*, but all the littles go to make the much; and if the pence now wasted were saved, and put out to interest,—not hoarded to do nobody any good, I am not an advocate for that, though I do like to know you have something laid by for sickness, or times of difficulty,—they would bring in an amount of comfort little dreamed of. It is sad to hear of hospitals, and orphan homes, etc., etc., wanting funds, and reducing their number of beds, while the gin-palaces and public-houses are “doing a roaring trade,” supported chiefly by those who in illness are thankful to receive help from those institutions which give freely as far as lies in their power; who, indeed, sometimes demand it as a *right*, when if they thought properly about it they would see it is their first wisdom and duty to provide for emergencies, which are almost certain to happen, by belonging to a dispensary.

Is it not true, as I have asked elsewhere, that “he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it in a bag with holes”? (Hag. i. 6.) No heed taken of how the money goes. A penny here for tobacco; sixpence there for the extra glass of beer or spirits; a half-penny to the children for sweeties; a penny for “the gaff,” if you cannot afford more; and too often that very unsatisfactory item, the ruinous interest on pawn-tickets. Yes, indeed, the wages of too many don't seem to do half as much good as

they ought, owing to the carelessness, recklessness, and improvidence with which they are used. "A labouring man that is given to drunkenness shall not be rich," and "he that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." Here are some of the *holes*. Well, if the bag into which the wages are put is full of holes, or if there is only one, can't it be sewn up? Or if it is altogether too bad to be mended, can't a new one be substituted? How? That is the question. And as I want to set you thinking, I shall leave you to solve the problem for yourselves.

As to your homes, if you are content to breathe bad air, and live in the dirt, I suppose you may say it is nobody's business but your own. But it is a pity. I have seen really nice rows of houses in an unfinished neighbourhood let out in rooms and *racked* out in no time, because the dwellers in them didn't seem to care for cleanliness and decency, or how they used the property of others. You may not be able to afford high rents,—and I know the rent makes a terrible hole in the week's wages,—but you might set "a trap to catch a sunbeam." You might keep your windows bright, and open them wide to let in all you can of God's pure air and sunshine. You might keep your floors scrupulously clean, and expend a few pence on white-wash now and then, which would well repay you for the outlay. And then, perhaps, too it is often the question of "Penny wise and pound foolish." It

would be far better in the long run to pay an extra sixpence or a shilling, or even more, for a larger or more airy room, or even an extra one, than to have constantly the feeling of lassitude which living and sleeping in a very close room gives, and to have to pay for constant visits to the doctor, and sundry bottles of medicine to overcome it; to say nothing of the little drop of cordial you think you *must* have when you feel so bad.

I was lately hearing about a heathen race in India, many of whom have embraced Christianity, and it was asked, What has their Christianity done for them, and how is it seen? One way in which it was remarked was, that the houses of those who became Christians were immediately better than those of their heathen neighbours: where they formerly had only one room for a large family they would now have two, and would keep them clean and tidy. And in their dress the same distinction was to be noticed. It was not that they were much better dressed, as they could not afford that; but their appearance was altogether more clean and neat. A small thing perchance to notice; but as we say, a straw shows which way the current sets: and we see here how religion goes down into the most insignificant duties of daily life. Another thing to be noticed in them was that as soon as any one had heard the good news,—had received the truth in the love of it,—he was anxious that others should share in the benefit, and immediately began

to tell others round the glad tidings of a Saviour for poor sinners. Do they not in these things set us an example that we should do well to imitate ?

I suppose some people are essentially untidy ; and I have no doubt it is very depressing when once *muddle* has got the best of it, and that it is *very* difficult to rouse ; but it doesn't make it any better to take to the drink, as some do, or to give in wearily without an effort. I have often been so vexed to see the husbands and sons with a button off at the waist, or collar, which must be very uncomfortable ; or a little rent in the coat, which will get a great deal worse if the "stitch in time" is neglected. And I have been struck sometimes when there has been a great hunt for my books, or some runaway club card, to see the wild confusion of the drawers opened in the search. To me it would be hopeless to expect to find anything in such a receptacle ; and I am sure we all get on better for having the fairy Order of the child's story at our elbow,—for striving in all things to be orderly,—and remembering the proverb, "A place for everything, and everything in its place ;" and "A time for everything, and everything in its time."

This motto would often seem to be reversed, and might run, "No room for anything, and everything out of its place." We often make a mistake, and think because our territories are small and inconvenient there is no possibility of keeping them tidy ; whereas untidiness takes really a great deal more

time and room than tidiness. "Method," says Cecil, "is like packing things in a box: a good packer will get in half as much again as a bad one." I do, however, know many tidy rooms, which are like the pleasant green spots in the dreary desert, where it is a pleasure to receive the friendly invitation to sit down and have a talk: only I should like to see many more, and I don't think the difficulties are so insurmountable as might be imagined.

One thing that helps it very much is a measure of *handiness* which will "contrive to make something out of nothing;" to make incomes go further, and space hold more, than seems possible to other folk. I know a cook who used to make beautiful soup, "out of nothing," she said,—otherwise bones, etc., which were at hand,—better even, it was said, than when she set herself to make good soup out of properly supplied ingredients. Possibly thinking it more to her credit, she bestowed a little more care and pains over it; but I should like to know that more were as successful. Some do seem to have the knack of this: making old materials into garments "as new," with a little contrivance, or for a smaller person than they were originally intended, and contriving to turn everything to account; things which a thriftless person would have thrown away as not worth the trouble; articles of furniture which have seen good service, and seemed only fit for firewood, appearing again in a new guise, and adapted wondrously to a new purpose.

“My husband is so handy, he can turn his hand to anything: he has made me this, and this,” etc., is very pleasant to hear, and must be very pleasant to tell of. A beautiful press and chest of drawers and bedstead, which would have looked well anywhere, were displayed to me on one occasion by a wife, with honest pride that her husband thought her and his home worth working for out of time; but then he was a carpenter. But I do know others who are not of the trade giving their minds to making home comfortable, or getting a little money for extra comforts, and working at a variety of odds and ends in the evening by their own fireside, instead of sitting idly, or going out to lounge at “the idle corner,” or to join a boisterous party in the public-house.

No one wants to hinder you from enjoying yourselves. We only want you to see that it would be a great deal better to do it in a rational way. I think we all feel that a good many steps have been taken in the right direction, as the Saturday afternoons spent by working-men in visiting Westminster Abbey, the Tower, picture galleries, etc., show; and I think many of you are very thankful for the clubs, institutes, and “British Workman” public-houses which are now set on foot in so many places. But perhaps we are always in rather too great a hurry, and want to see people run before they can walk, and everything set to rights in a minute. It may be a slow process,—the recovery from sickness to

health,—the healing of deep-seated, festering wounds,—the turning from evil to good; and it ever stands true, “he that believeth shall not make haste,” and “ye have need of patience” in little things as well as great; but if our efforts are made in a right spirit, and in dependence on a strength not our own even in the smallest matters, we shall have the comfort of knowing that there is progress. “Slow and sure wins the race,” as in the old fable of “the hare and the tortoise.”

I think some of you much like working for the Industrial exhibitions, that give you a spur to work in the long winter evenings, and an opportunity for displaying your performances to encourage others. You find out you can do something you did not know you could till you tried, and that is always a pleasant feeling. I have seen famous hearthrugs and counterpanes, to say nothing of mats and smaller articles, made by men who were not ashamed to demean themselves by such employment; also many models, picture-frames, and drawings, the produce of these “evenings at home.” I know many amateur shoemakers, who will buy the tops for boots and fit them to the sole for wife or child, or make tiny shoes out of worn-out large ones; and I know an engine-man who makes one thing after another for his wife, who has only to say she wants it, whether it has to do with his trade or not; the last performance being a capital clothes-horse. Many of us have found out that it is much cheaper

in the end to make our own things, as we can afford to make them of better materials if we have not to pay for the labour in making them; and then they last longer. Though in these days of under-selling and wonderfully cheap getting up, a thing may look very attractively cheap, and we may think it is surely better worth buying it than taking the trouble to make it ourselves; but in the long run it is better to take that trouble, or to wait till we can afford to pay a fair price for it, than to buy a thing because it is "so ridiculously cheap." What a good thing it would be if we all remembered to determine to do without a thing until we had the money to pay for it, and resolutely avoided running into debt. I know some gentlefolks,—many of whom know quite as much about pinching poverty as you do,—who make this a most rigid rule. It has come to be a standing joke amongst us that some things are "bought, but not paid for," as a poor, shabby, genteel person said, in reference to a new dress which attracted our attention and hope that some one had given it to her, as she appeared in it one day on a begging expedition. I fear a good many things thus bought are never paid for, or not till the article has been long worn out, which is a very unsatisfactory way of spending money.

You know if a child is fretful and out of temper the best thing is to find it something to do. It is most wretched to hear the perpetual whine, "Nothing to do," finishing up with a burst of passion which

might so easily have been averted by a little care on the part of the caretaker. We cannot expect a child to be good with a restless, listless feeling upon it; and change of occupation, or if it is old enough, the permission to do something ever so trivial, which it imagines is helping mother, or getting ready for father, is the best cure.

Some people, from children upwards, must be doing something, and if there is nothing else to do they have a happy faculty of getting into mischief. This restless activity, however, may be turned to good account. A child with a mechanical turn of mind needs to be watched and regulated, or its destructive, or constructive, genius will often cause it to get into trouble and be called naughty, when it has destroyed a thing,—not for naughtiness, but to see how it is made, and in the vain hope of being able to put it together again. There are more of us, possibly, than we know of who are like children cutting open their drums to see where the sound comes from.

We are but children of a larger growth, and are never really happy when we are idle. And when we are tired with work which is part of our daily duty and so often tires us just because we feel we *must* go through it, it is a recreation to turn to any other occupation of quite a different character. Flowers and animals and birds there are to be tended; books to be read; children to be played with. What happy homes ours might be!

Some of you don't care about reading for yourselves, but you like to be read to; and some of you don't care about reading *aloud*, though you like reading to yourselves. But it is well to vary this according to your occupations, and not selfishly to think only of what you like best. Those who are not very good scholars don't care to read aloud, but they might do it to improve themselves; and generally, of course, the wife could find plenty to occupy her needle if her husband would read to her. You know I am always supposing that the wife does not go out to work (which of old I have told you I believe to be a *very great mistake*, and a *very great hole* in the household bag of comfort), but stays at home to keep a comfortable home for her husband, and a watchful eye over her children.

I have suggested sometimes "how nice it would be if father would read that book aloud," and been very sorry to be told that he is not scholar enough, and that the wife has to do all the reading. If any of you are not good scholars enough to enjoy reading, there are plenty of helps now-a-days of which it would be wise to avail yourselves.

I was very sorry lately to find so many in a village who were no scholars: "there wasn't any schooling when they were young," or they "had to go to work so early and they had forgotten what they knew." I advised that the children should teach their parents, but some of them didn't seem to think it was worth the trouble. Sometimes neither husband

nor wife could read, which seemed to me a most doleful state of things. Then I suggested perhaps a neighbour could, and it was pleasant to see how this idea was taken up, and some books gratefully accepted on these terms. But very grieved was I to be told by an old blind man that nobody at home could read, and it was no use his taking it, when I offered him that touching story, "Grasping the Promises," which I thought must interest him, and especially as the healing of blind Bartimeus is referred to in it. And when I expressed surprise, and still begged him to take it home and try to find some neighbour who would read it to him, he again repeated that he could get nobody to do so. I feared lest there was the enmity of the natural heart there ; but there was no time for conversation, as we were obliged to hasten on. One man I came across, a carpenter, who could carry things in his head for a month, and never made a mistake or forgot what he wanted to remember for his trade, and who had a fashion of his own as to figures and calculations which I suppose would have puzzled any one else, had fortunately a wife who could read, so he seemed to think as he had got on without it so well that it was not worth while turning pupil to his child, as I suggested. Though I think the general feeling was "more's the pity," as they confessed their inability to read.

One man said once to me, "You wouldn't have found me here if I had been a scholar: I've lost a

good many chances in life through it." We certainly, all of us, ought to make the best use of our opportunities of improving our minds; but when we don't know much, very often we grow indolent and don't care to try to know more. There are many instances of what people have done by trying, or by making use of the "corners of time;" many stories of "self-made men," to allure us on in the pursuit of knowledge. Stockings have been knit; languages have been learned; books have been read, aye, and written too, in *odd* minutes. We ought to take a pattern and see what we can do. Let us remember that "Idleness is a cradle that Satan delights to rock," and see to it that we are never decoyed into it. I remember thinking a Welsh woman was making the most of her time as we met her one day among the mountains, driving a sheep, with a goose under each arm, and knitting as fast as her fingers could go! We generally say, "One thing at a time;" but if we can thus do two, or even three, as she did, on a push, I suppose it is allowable. Only we do deceive ourselves so sometimes, and being exceedingly busy one day, we think we may be very idle the next. "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." And in every step of our way, and time and circumstance of our life, we need to look up to our Father in heaven and say, "Teach me to do Thy will," for that will goes into the details of our daily life, and we are admonished "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever

ye do, do all to the glory of God ;” “ Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” There is an Old Testament exhortation to put beside these: “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave whither thou goest ” (Eccles. ix. 10.)

There is an awful waste of those “ corners of time.” God says, “ Redeeming the time,”—buy it back from waste: and we don’t. We do not take any count of time,—of the moments as they go ; and then at the end of the day we are fain to cry shame on ourselves ; at the end of the week we do not know where it has gone, and we have not done half we intended to do. And so the years go on and on, yielding up their account ; and too often the balance is fearfully against us, and the time will come when we shall wish that we had employed our time better. We are told to do heartily as unto the Lord, and with all our might, whatsoever our hand findeth to do, because the time for doing it will soon be over for us ; and though we say, “ Time enough yet,” when pressed to make sure of something which really ought to be done, and are anxious to put off anything, and especially, as too many of us do, the attending to the eternal interests of our precious, never-dying souls, yet we know the warning comes to us laden with the moans of many a procrastinating soul: “ Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” We say “ To-morrow,”

but God says, "Thou knowest not what shall be upon the morrow." So "it is time to seek the Lord," for "God requireth the past," and there is many an old score to be settled and wiped off. Thank God there is a way for this to be done, and only one way, which He tells us of when He says, "I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions;" for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which will love him most?" It may well appal us to look back over our lives, and only take count of the wasted moments, when "God requireth the past," and brings our sin, in this respect only, to our remembrance; and make us ask very earnestly, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am." Yes: the longest life is but as a vapour,—a handbreadth.—"Thou takest away their breath, they die," and then will they be received into the "everlasting habitations"?

We have spoken of turning things to account; do not you feel a sort of pleasure in doing this,—in making that look respectable which others had given up, in finding a use for something that others had thrown aside as perfectly useless? My friends, did it ever strike you that there is a great deal of waste material, waste power in the world, and that it may rest with some of you to turn

some of it to account? How many people are there of whom others say they are no use in the world! How many are miscalled, and pushed on one side in the battle of life, till they really believe it is true, and being of no use they wish in themselves that they might die! And, alas, some of them take it into their own hands and do die; and, saying It is better for me to die than live, put an end to themselves, as we say. Alas, alas: an end is it? It is only another beginning, that we hardly dare think of. But of that waste material there is a great deal that Satan is trying to brand with his mark, that he is perfectly willing to make use of, while there is a great deal which, with your help, might be made use of to the community, and through God's mercy might be stamped with His mark,—“Sealed unto the day of redemption.” Never push anyone down, but always hold out the helping hand, always point to the hope set before us. “We are saved by hope;” our lives are brightened by hope: and if we can infuse hope into a hopeless soul we know it is like letting in the glad sunshine to a dreary dungeon,—everything looks so different in the glow. Try then to elevate and encourage and utilize the waste material around. Look out for it, and see if you can't make some of it turn to account. It is frightful to think of the mass of waste life there is; and if we only each one could pick out one life from the mass, what a comfort! What an honour to be allowed to do it! There are many who find treasures in a dust-heap,

where you would not perhaps expect it; and if you saw a glitter on a dung-heap you would not hesitate to snatch it therefrom and see if you had not found a prize. And a human soul: oh, what a precious thing! We learn its preciousness by God's care for it, by the ransom paid for it, and by the fact that, weighed in the balances of the sanctuary against the world, the soul outweighs it,—the world is found wanting. A human life: what a priceless thing to be snatched from destruction by your help! Verily "He that winneth souls is wise;" and "they that be wise shall shine in the kingdom of their Father;" and whoso "converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins" (not of his own, but of his neighbour's, by bringing him to trust in Him who will blot them out).

Could you not encourage some little child to come to the Good Shepherd and be blest, and then to live as a little Christian should live; lovingly doing all the little child's duties, that are so irksome sometimes, or at least to one who has not learnt to obey and to be kindly affectioned, in honour preferring others above himself? "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right." And if it is not the will of the Father in heaven that one of these little ones perish, and a woe is pronounced against those who offend or make one of these little ones to sin, surely it is a sweet privilege to be permitted to take offence out of the

way, and to help the little feet to go in the way of God's commandments. A poor dying sinner who had been found, after weary wandering, by the Good Shepherd who goeth after the sheep until He find it, did once comfort himself with the thought that God would even accept "the devil's castaways." But oh, better, a thousand times better, that the young life be given up to Him! that in the freshness of youth and feeling the heart's best affections be yielded to Him; that a life of loving service may prove that what might have been waste, or worse, has been used by the great King, and owned of Him.

Can you not point some weary, aimless soul to the niche that is waiting for his service to fill? Can you not by some skilful manœuvre wake up the hope of being and doing something, by just leaving something undone yourself right at his feet, so that he cannot help but take it up and do it, and doing it be impelled with a little waking glow of feeling, to ask, What next? They said I was of use, and if I can do that I can do something better still.—If we only saw it so, how much happier would our lives be, that we are not living as by and for ourselves, but as by and for Him who died for us, and then of necessity for those around. And if He honours you by letting you rescue a jewel for the Redeemer's crown, from amid the mass of waste that appears on all sides, will you not thank Him, saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, oh Lord, but to Thy name be the glory"?

We have spoken of happy homes: they should be

“like a little heaven below.” But the heaven we look for shall know no change,—the riches we look for are enduring riches,—the inheritance we long for is certain to be ours if we are Christ’s, for Christ is God’s. “Set your affections then on things above, and not on things on the earth,” for here moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal; and there are many holes in the bag, and much labour and sorrow in the happiest lot,—

“But there are perfectness and peace
Beyond our best desire.”


“Lay up for yourselves therefore treasure in heaven,” where, in God’s presence, “there are pleasures for evermore.”

X.

OUR BEST.

“I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast kept
The best in store ;
We have enough, yet not too much
To long for more ;
A yearning for a deeper peace
Not known before.”

“Oh, for the pearly gates of heaven,
Oh, for the golden floor ;
Oh, for the sun of righteousness,
That setteth never more !”

“ND the best is yet to come!”—Dying words !
We are apt to treasure them in memory’s
storehouse ; and sometimes if a loved one
has passed away without a dying message, we have
a longing to hear the voice again, with just one last
word ; a heart ache

“For the sound of a voice that is dead.”

Dying words oftentimes give out a depth of love to those around, and an experience of God’s truth which comfort and teach those left behind. Some dying words we fain would forget: when the awful future

will not be put away, but the soul is waking to the realities beyond this life, which till now it has striven to put away or forget; and the horror breaks out in a pleading, "Not yet: I cannot die!" But the fiat has gone forth, and the naked shrinking soul passes into the presence of its Judge. Well would it be if all would now lay to heart Christ's question to the Pharisees of old: "How shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" It is a life problem with many who are striving and struggling to make a way of escape for themselves, and who will not read the plain direction on the finger-post pointing heavenwards at the entrance of that opened way, so plain that "he who runs may read," "and the wayfaring man, though a fool," need "not err therein." It is indeed a fearful thing to wake from a dream of safety, and find ourselves on the edge of a precipice; having to take a leap in the dark, when there ought to be nothing to do but to die saying "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

"An acre of gold for an inch of time!" are said to have been almost the last words of our Queen Elizabeth,—who for her wise rule and the prosperity enjoyed in her reign, in contrast to that of "bloody Mary," was called "The good Queen Bess,"—as she besought her physicians to accord her a few more hours of life.

"Had I but served my God as faithfully as I have served my king and my country, I should not now be left to die friendless and forlorn," was the dying

thought of that favourite of fortune Cardinal Wolsey, who was deprived of his honours and his royal master Henry the Eighth's favour, and left to die in shame and neglect.

One has well said, "Tell me how a man lived, and I will tell you how he died;" for it is the testimony of the life that we look at. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him," but before going "he had this testimony, that he pleased God." That description still applies to some on the earth, and of some whom we have known we can say indeed that sudden death was sudden glory; where they have been so clearly living for God, and having heard His call, their

"Soul undrest
From the mortal vest,
Has stept into her car of heavenly fire,
And proved how bright
Were the realms of light,
Bursting at once upon the sight."

"Very shocking!" people say, when they hear of a sudden death; but they pass on and soon forget it, and forget too that they may die as suddenly. "From sudden death good Lord deliver us;" or keep us so ready for it that it may be to us sudden glory.

A great many of us echo Balaam's wish: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." And a very good wish it is. But for holy dying there must be holy living, and for holy living we want the new nature implanted; we want

the exertion of the quickening power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that we may be new creatures in Christ Jesus; that it may be true of us, "and you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The faith which receives Christ as a living Saviour is necessarily accompanied by a holy life. Its very existence is proved by our yielding ourselves to do the will of God; and this for His honour and glory, as well as our own comfort and obedience.

We may know much, but if we do not act on our knowledge it does us no good. We are a practical people, though there are some very unpractical ones among us; and those live the most useful lives who know how to bring their knowledge to bear on the every-day circumstances of life. This is acknowledged freely with regard to outward things; the discoveries of science and modern invention tending to the comfort and well-being of individuals and communities; the researches of wise and clever men, or the apparently accidental discovery being instantly turned to some use. But with too many their Christianity is anything but practical. The fact is religion ought to be the business of our daily lives, but they are content to keep theirs for church, or their chambers; or to put it on, as it has been said, with their Sunday clothes, or keep it for a time of anxiety, or when the darkened window proclaims the presence of death. But a religion of this sort is no religion at all: a Christless intermittent religion is no good to live by, and certainly no good to die

by. Christ must *reign* in your heart here if you would reign with Him above.

A little band of loyal hearted men went forth some years ago, to an inhospitable region, the island of Terra del Fuego, at the south of South America, to bear the glad message of a Saviour's love, and hoping to win the rough people of that far-off land to Christianity and civilization. But misfortune followed them: they could get no supplies; no ship came to them, and they were left to perish. Day by day they grew weaker, and one by one they sank under their hardships, creeping away to die alone, that the others might not be more disheartened by seeing them fail. And when at last the ship did come, there were beside the dead but a few touching memorials of their faith, and patience, and trust in the teeth of their disappointed hopes and in spite of having been left to starve. In man's sight the expedition had been a failure; though others have been raised up to carry on the work so dear to Allan Gardiner. He was the last to die, and he has left us a life's motto in the following lines:—

“All that I have, O Lord, is Thine;
All that I am, Thy Spirit wrought.
What would I not for Thee resign,
Whose precious blood my ransom bought?
Lord, here I am: my life, my all,
I hold obedient to Thy call.”

When the mainspring of a watch is broken it will not go: it must have a new one. And we want a

new mainspring. Supposing an elaborate piece of machinery to be in thorough working order, it is quite useless, utterly powerless to effect any purpose unless the motive power be applied; and then it wants careful watching to keep it going well. And we may try in vain to repair our broken mainspring; or, having carefully corrected and ruled our outward life, to give ourselves the motive power. But what we cannot do God can. He says, "I will give you one heart and one way:" a single heart to love and serve Him. "A new spirit will I put within you:" a single heart *set* on serving and honouring Him.

You have a Christian name. Did you ever think what that means,—what it implies for you? In old times the surname often had a meaning, or was a sort of title given to distinguish one Christian name from another; taking hold of some peculiarity of person, or employment, or character, or merely distinguishing one person as the son of such an one. Out of these, with some little alteration, have grown our surnames of now-a-days. Our surnames belong to us, or we to them: but our Christian name is *given* to us, and but for our familiarity with holy things, and our carelessness in handling them, we should cherish it as a reminder that being called by a Christian name, we must live as a Christian should. Alas, we call ourselves by the name of Christ; His name is upon us, and yet as "all are not Israel who are of Israel," too many of us think nothing of our calling to live as Christians, soldiers of Christ,

children of God, led of the Spirit. We are born in Christian England, we are nurtured under the sound of sabbath bells, and with many helps for the soul in its way through the world, but it is all as nothing to us.

It is not *nothing* though. We shall have to answer for our use of these privileges. When children we were taught to sing,

“I thank the goodness and the grace
Which on my birth have smiled,
And made me in these Christian days
A happy English child.”

But we forget as we grow up. “One shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.” Blessed choice which the Lord the Spirit dictates when we are enabled to say, “I will be no longer a Christian in name: I will serve the Lord. I am on the Lord’s side, and the Lord being on my side, I will not fear that man or devil can really hinder me; for ‘when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against him.’”

What about your life? Is it holy living and will it be holy dying for you? Do you love Jesus? Are you walking in the fear of the Lord? Are you ready to die? Are you ready to meet Him?

“No: I can’t say that I am. I am sure I am not: but I mean to get ready some day,” said one I

was pleading with one day. "I do my best—" but here I stopped him short. I told him that was no use at all; but that he must let God do His best; or rather believe that He had done His best when He gave His only Son to die for us. I feared he wasn't even doing his best as regarded himself, or his wife and family; but that was beside the question then; and I wanted him to see that our *best* is as our worst. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," said the Apostle Paul; and he knew perfectly well what he was saying, as he had really done his very best for years, and could appeal to others that his religion had been of the strictest, and that as touching the righteousness which is in the law he was blameless, even before he understood what real religion was; and who afterwards declared that he exercised himself "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Our *best* will never recommend us to God: it may get us a good name among men. We may stand well with those around, may appear to have on "the wedding garment,"—having covered ourselves with a cloke of fair profession, and striven to weave for ourselves a covering robe,—but a day will surely come of sifting and testing; and when the King comes in to see the guests nothing escapes His searching eye. Before that detecting glance the coarse threads and ragged tissues display themselves, and the robe appears in its reality when tested by heaven's light. And what if it be ours to hear that awful question, "Friend, how

camest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?" If we had to present our *best* to God as a ground for acceptance, if we had to work out an allotted task before we could sue for mercy,—with what a misery feeling should we go about it, fearing lest after all it should come short,—lest we should fail by some slight fault. But, blessed be God, it has all been done for us, and Christ's best is reckoned to our account if we will but have it so; and great is the mercy that when He takes away the filthy garments He clothes us with a change of raiment, and that "we are not called to weave the robe, but to wear it." And when we see this certainly, with loving grateful hearts we desire to live for Him and give Him our heart's best affections, and the best of our time and all that we have. And truly He does then expect us to say, "I will do my best, and give Him my best:" and He accepts it too. Of this I have spoken often, but still we do well to remind ourselves of it.

- "No works, no tears may plead for us
 Before the eternal throne;
 No hope, no plea, no refuge left,
 Save Christ, and Christ alone!
- "And then how sweet, how passing sweet,
 To know our pardon won;
 And still, like loving children,
 To pray and labour on.
- "Not fearfully, as those who toil
 In hope of a reward;
 But with free, joyous, grateful hearts,
 Brought home, through Christ, to God."

For a Christian is a marked man. The eyes of the world, yea, of "a cloud of witnesses," are upon him, and therefore it is well that he should do his best to "recommend the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," and "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." I have often reminded you that not one of us can be in the world without leaving our mark upon it, be it great or small, be it for good or evil, affecting a large circle or a small one; the devil's mark stamped on our work, or Christ's mark woven into it like a golden thread, will be seen, and will *tell* on those with whom we associate.

Many a time will those around say, as they did of old to the disciples of Jesus, "What do ye, loosing the colt?" (Mark xi. 1—6) when our conduct strikes them as extraordinary, as unnecessary. Jesus had prepared them for the question, "Why do ye this?" and given them a reply wherewith to answer. Let us see to it that we are imitating those disciples, who "went and did as Jesus commanded them" in unquestioning obedience. (Matt. xxi. 6.) So that whether the work He requires from us be important or trivial we may have the answer ready, "The Lord hath need of it." We must not forget that there are always those around who are watching our actions, and questioning concerning them and our motives for them; and therefore we should turn this question in on ourselves, "What do ye," and *why?* asking for the detecting light of the Holy Spirit, that all the corners of our deceitful hearts may be searched even

as "with candles," that if there be any "chambers of imagery" which we are working to decorate, or any idols set up in our hearts for which we are working while thinking we are doing it for Christ, they may be exposed to the light.

"Light up every dark recess
Of our hearts in godliness."

We are very often willing to give to the Lord everything but just the very thing He "hath need of." I have reminded you elsewhere that the first thing is to say, "I'll give Him myself." But this is very often a reason why those who say they are wishing to be good and love Jesus can't get peace, and why those who we do hope are on the Lord's side yet are not happy,—even "go mourning all their days:" they cannot make up their minds to give up *all* for Jesus. Just *one little* bad habit kept, one little piece of the world's pleasure, like a little string round the foot of a bird, holds them; they beat their wings vainly, but it prevents them taking wing like a dove, and fleeing away to Jesus to be at rest. They are parleying with *one* foe only, who speaks so pleasantly it surely cannot be dangerous; they cannot help making *one* reservation. If Jesus had not emptied Himself of His glory and given up *all* to meet our sore need, we had never felt the need and the delight of giving up *all* for Him. Are we then really giving to the Lord that which He hath need of?

And what a precious comforting thought this is,—that it is *the Lord that hath need* of our service, of our time, of our talents, of our loved ones, and that there is even something wanting to His glory when His requirements concerning us are not complied with. He might have done without us, and been satisfied with the praise and the service of angels, but in His condescending love He stoops to require, and to be honoured by that of redeemed sinners. Don't any of you say, "I am too mean, too sinful to render Him acceptable service." If you love Him He hath need of your service; if you don't love Him yet He hath need of your heart. There is a place for all. Paul tells us that, when he reminds us that "in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour." (2 Tim. ii. 20.) Some apparently more valuable than others, but all necessary. And on the occasion we have been referring to, it was but a small thing that Jesus required: just the loan of an ass. It was but a small thing He accepted from the poor widow: just two mites.

"There is no child too small
To work for God,
There is a mission for us all,
From Christ the Lord."

Remember the Lord requires but His own, and the obligation to give Him that He hath need of,—our best,—is binding on *every* soul of man; as we are

His by creation, if we have not yet claimed to be His by adoption into His redeemed family. "Of thine own have I given thee." If our hearts beat true we conceive it an honour indeed to be required by the Lord, to be allowed to do something for Him.

"The Lord hath need of" our best and of our whole service; and that we may yield Him acceptable service by Jesus Christ, we must be "partakers of His holiness." In order to this He often has to put us in the school of affliction, where under discipline we say, "Teach me to do Thy will, shew me what Thou hast need of as regards me and mine." And the thought "The Lord hath need of it," will stay the mind when, in despondency or doubt, it shrinks under the pressure of His will. "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer." (Prov. xxv. 4.) By what means soever this has to be accomplished, we shall not faint in the furnace with Jesus by us, but take joyfully the spoiling of our goods or our earthly prospects, if we remember that it is but the means to an end,—even the accomplishment of the Father's will concerning us, His requirement of or from us. So whether He takes away our loved ones, our health, or wealth; or whether He desires us to use them for Him; whether the message be,—

" 'The Lord hath need of these flowerets gay,'
The reaper said, and smiled;
'Dear tokens of the earth are they,
Where He was once a child;'"

"I take away the desire of thine eyes with a stroke;" "Come ye yourselves into a desert place and rest awhile," or, "Arise, go to Nineveh and cry against it." "Arise and go toward the south, and join thyself to His chariot" (Acts viii. 26, 29), or, "Go, show thyself to Ahab" (1 Kings xviii. 1); whether easy or difficult for flesh and blood to comply with, if our lives are consecrated with this thought, "I am His and He is mine," "The Lord hath need of me and mine," we shall ever be looking up to Him with loving, unquestioning obedience, hasting to do His will; assured that in His own good time and way He will make it all plain for us.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" (1 Chron. xxix. 5.) Again we remind ourselves that He wants a willing, ungrudging service,—our best. We often, read "The people offered willingly," but when they said, "Behold what a weariness it is," and brought not their *best* but their *worst*, that which they did not want for themselves, or which was no use to them, "the torn, the lame, the sick" for sacrifice, He would not accept it. (Mal. i. 13.) So it is only the service yielded under the influence of the constraining love of Christ, a simple, whole-hearted, loving service, with which He is well pleased. Let our lives then be dedicated to Him, and we shall be able to say, "All these things, as made kings and priests unto our God, do we give unto THE KING;" and with the King's mark on ourselves and our service, we shall yield Him our

best, *not* that which costs us nothing (see 2 Sam. xxiv. 23, 24); and so wait patiently till the word being said for us, "The Lord hath need of thee," the work for Him here is laid aside, and we enter on the first experiences of the realization of the fulness of joy that is in His presence.

"Jesus said unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord." Am I speaking parables, dear friends? Then go to the great Teacher, as His disciples did of old, saying, "What might this parable be? Declare it unto us." "And when He was alone they asked Him of the parable." Go alone to Jesus, and then hear that "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not; then openeth He the ears of man and sealeth their instruction."

You know I always like to make friends, so one day in the country I was attracted by some houses on wheels, and thought I should like to know a little of van life. I cannot say it made me particularly anxious to try it; but I was interested in seeing and hearing how a large part of our roaming population live in the summer months. There hardly seemed to me room to turn round: though that was partly explained by the fact that "goods" and "goodies" from the station were filling up the small space in anticipation of the morrow's fair; and I was in perpetual terror that the women and children would set themselves on fire, as their dresses touched the bars of the stove.

But my books and I were received very civilly, and I had a long talk with the inhabitants, telling the weary women of Him who says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." One of the men said, in the course of our conversation, that when we die we are just put in the ground and that is the end of us. In this belief there is room for the thought, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:" but we know better; though the lives of many seem to say this is what they try to believe. But holding up the Bible I had in my hand, I said, "If you think that, what is the use of this Book?" "I will tell you what I think is the use of it," he said. "I think the world would be a great deal worse without it: there is plenty of wickedness, but people would be a great deal wickeder. It is a kind of law to them, and makes them afraid, and keeps them back from doing many things."

You see he had a sort of consciousness that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," though he didn't profess to be very good himself. He, too, thought if he did his best and got an honest living for himself and family, that was all that could possibly be expected of him. I spoke of a hereafter, and asked if he would not wish to be happy in heaven? He said he had been in heaven; and when I looked my question, knowing from what he had told me of his life and thoughts that he could have very little idea of what heaven really is, he said that when he sat down and read for half-an-

hour after the day's work was done, and all the six children were quietly asleep, it was like heaven. I might suppose with six children there was not much peace or quietness save when they were asleep.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him;” but God can reveal even that which seems so incomprehensible, and can, by the teaching of the blessed Spirit, enable us to apprehend and understand the difference between *our* poor earth-bound thoughts of God and His home, His love and His ways, His works and His dealings with the sons of men, and *His* own thoughts. High indeed they are; deep indeed are His counsels,—past finding out; as He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways:” but when we begin to understand and love to think them over, we are ready to exclaim, “How precious are Thy thoughts!” He teaches us the difference between our ideas of heaven and the blessed reality; though for the full appreciation of it we must wait till the working day is really done, and we are called to enter into the joy and rest of our Lord. It is blessed to love and serve Him here; it is blessed to know His love and to be able to say, “We love Him *because* He first loved us;” but St. Paul tells us it is far better to go and be with Christ. “To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality,—eternal life.”

“*And the best is yet to come.*” These were the

dying words of one who had laboured successfully for the good of his fellows trusting in his God, as he passed away from work on earth to rest in his place in the heavenly temple, where service is rest and rest is service: for "His servants shall serve Him, and they rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." The good Lord give us a place in that blessedness for His sake, who "is able to keep (us) from falling, and to present (us) faultless before the throne of His glory."

"We speak of the realms of the blest,
Of that country so bright and so fair,
And oft are its glories confessed,
But what must it be to be there!"

"No heart may know this bliss when life is done."

"Such is Thy banquet, dearest Lord ;
Oh, give us grace to cast
Our lot with Thine, to trust Thy word,
And keep our best till last."

"We shall see God ! How deep the bliss
We know not yet that lies in this.
Lord Jesus come, our hearts prepare."

XI.

OPEN GATES.

“Do you see yonder wicket gate? Keep that light in your eye, and go directly up thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.’


“Now over the gate there was written, ‘Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’ Christian knocked therefore, more than once or twice, saying,—

“‘May I now enter here? Will he within
Open to sorry me, though I have been
An undeserving rebel? Then shall I
Not fail to sing his lasting praise on high.’

“At last there came a grave person to the gate, named Goodwill, who asked who was there, and whence he came, and what he would have?

“Christian: ‘Here is a poor burdened sinner; I come from the City of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. I would therefore, sir, since I am informed that by this gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in.’

“‘*I am willing with all my heart,*’ said he; and with that he opened the gate.”—*Pilgrim’s Progress.*

HEN I first heard that piece sung, “The Gates Ajar,” I said the line ought to run,—

“Oh, depth of mercy! Can it be
That gate is *open wide* for me?”

For the gates of the heavenly city are not shut day nor night, and the gate of mercy is never closed against a suppliant soul. The gates of the cities of refuge, in the land of Israel of old, were always set wide open, so that anyone running from the avenger of blood, and wishing to enter hurriedly, found no obstacle in a barred gate. In old troublous times in our own land the drawbridge was raised and the castle gates securely fastened, so that if a fugitive in hot haste demanded an entrance, there was sometimes time for his pursuers to be upon him or ever the bolts could be withdrawn and the bridge lowered. It is not so with our city of refuge.

It is vexing sometimes to find a gate barring our progress, when we had made sure it would be open, and the finding it shut suggests a retracing of our steps and a great loss of time. I remember once, in Devonshire, when we had had a beautiful walk, and were now not far from home, to our dismay we came upon a fast closed gate. Time was precious, and we were tired; and we should have a long weary walk if we could not overcome the difficulty. It was impossible to climb the gate, as it had been evidently constructed to defy any attempt of the kind; but we had already been over a wall, and at last we decided that we must try and scale the rock at the side, and somehow scramble and drop the distance, about twelve feet, into the road. It was awkward, but it was better than the alternative of going round several miles and being late for a start on a further

journey; so it was accomplished. A difficulty may meet us sometimes in our path to the heavenly city, but it is to make us give ourselves to prayer, and no barred gate stands in our way to hinder; there is no need for climbing up some other way, for Jesus says, "I am the door: he that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

You make up your minds to have a holiday, and you start early in the morning, for Kew Gardens say, if you live near London; but you arrive too soon, and are met by the notice that the gates will not be opened till one o'clock. Rather disconcerted, but seeing there is no help for it, you make your way to the British Museum. But there again closed gates await you. You had not thought of it, but it is the wrong day, and the gate-keeper is as inexorable as the man at Kew. You then determine to go to some place of amusement, but you are too late; the place is full, the gates are shut, and it is as much as the man's place is worth to open them for you. Sometimes in such a dilemma a friend who has a pass, comes by and says he will take you in.

Friends, mercy's gate stands wide open, and you are invited, nay, entreated to enter. Does it seem to your eyes to be shut? It is so just to make you determine to make an effort to get in, for the word is "Knock, and it *shall* be opened unto you." And methinks it is even as it was when Peter was being released from prison; led out by the guardian angel, his fetters fell off, and though as he went he possibly

might have thought, "But the great iron gate that leadeth into the city, how about that?"—yet "when they were past the first and the second ward," it "*opened to them of his own accord.*" And so if you are led of the Spirit now to say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," deliver the prey from the deep dungeon, from the hand of the strong man armed, bring my soul out of prison to breathe freely in the pure air of heaven,—the gate which you had thought was closed will open to you of its own accord, and you will know that there never was any real obstacle to your being saved, but your own inability to believe how ready Jesus is to save you. But mind, it is only if you say *now*, "Lord, Lord, open,"—for alas, as you have been so often reminded, the time will come when it will be *too late* to say it. You will come at the *wrong time*, and the gates will be shut, and hopelessly, inexorably, will they be barred against further admissions, "when once the Master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door." But *now* if you are saying, "Suppose the gate is shut," a Friend is ready to give you a pass, nay more, to take you in Himself; even He who came from heaven on purpose to open the way, to make a way of escape and acceptance for us; who says, "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go no more out." Will you refuse His aid? Will you refuse to let Him set you free, and save you from the avenger of blood? Will you refuse to ask Him for the "right to enter in through the gate into the city"? For "He

openeth and no man shutteth, He shutteth and no man openeth." And outside the "city of refuge" *here* is outside the holy city *there*, and outside the city is outside *hope*. Now you may be clean and holy, but then "he that is unjust" will remain unjust, and "he which is filthy will be filthy still," and "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

I once wrote to you, "It won't be God's fault if you are not saved. *It will be your own, and you know it.* If we are lost, the fault, the blame will be all our own. A rejected Saviour, a despised Gospel, a neglected way of salvation will witness to our confusion." I have just read words that put this sadly and strongly before us: speaking of Judas repelling Christ's pleading love, which condescended to remonstrate with him even when he came to the garden of Gethsemane to betray his Master, the writer says, "What did Judas do? Nothing: it was enough. He merely held his peace,—no more. There was no need for him to break out with oaths and curses, to reject his Lord with wild words: silence was sufficient. And for us no more is required; we have but to be passive,—we have but to stand still. Not to accept is to refuse; non-submission is rebellion. We do not need to emphasize our refusal by any action; no need to lift our clenched hands in defiance. We have simply to put them behind our backs, or to keep them folded. The closed hand must remain

an empty hand. 'He that believeth not is condemned.' My friends, remember that when Christ pleads and draws, to do nothing is to oppose, and to delay is to refuse. It is a very easy matter to ruin your soul: you have simply to keep still when He says, 'Come unto Me;'—to keep your eyes fixed where they were when He says, 'Look unto Me and be ye saved.'"

Oh, how many there are who shelter themselves under the plea, "I never did anything wrong;" meaning thereby, we will suppose, anything in direct opposition to the laws of society, or anything that the world can point at! I have often taken you up when you have so expressed yourselves to me; Indeed I cannot say so, I wish I could, but the Scripture hath concluded us all under one sentence, "There is none that doeth good, no not one, and every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually." But here you see again that it does not need to do anything so very bad; it is just the *not* doing that makes the badness often. It is no good to say, "I am not worse than others," or, "I am as good as they." The question is between your own soul and God. Are you accepting or rejecting Him? We must not suppose that every single person in Sodom and Gomorrah was as wicked as can be, speaking after the manner of men; but they all perished in the terrible destruction of those cities, because they did *not* heed the warning, and go out with Lot. Neither need we say that there were not degrees of wicked-

ness, as man counts them, among those who perished by the flood; but they all were drowned, because they did *not* heed Noah's warning and invitation into the ark. So my friends if you will not accept the offer of a free salvation, "you shall all likewise perish."

It is an awful thing to take up the pen to write, to go forth to plead for Jesus, to speak quietly one with another, to study our Bibles together, and together to kneel down before God's footstool, and to think this may be for increased condemnation. If it does not help it will hinder, for, as in the case of Judas, notice too how the appeal of Christ's love hardens where it does not soften. Every pleading of Christ's grace, whether by providences, or by books, or by His own word does something with us. It is never vain; either it melts or it hardens. You cannot come near the most inadequate exhibition of the pardoning love of Christ, without being either drawn closer to Him or driven further from Him. Each act of rejection prepares the way for another, which will be easier, and adds another film to the darkness which covers your eyes, another layer to the hardness which encrusts your hearts.

Oh friends, lay these words to heart! What are you doing? Just nothing: holding back: keeping aloof from Christ, because you think if you turn religious you will have to give up this and that, that your heart clings to. Yes, you may have to give up something, but is there *nothing* to be got in exchange?

Yes, you will have to give up your indifference: oh, "see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh, for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" There it is again put before us: just *neglect* it, put it by and forget it; put it by for the convenient season. You mean to take a little precaution that is suggested to avert some disagreeable consequences, but you neglect it till it is *too late*: the height of folly with regard to the things of this life; and unutterable woe when the neglect tells upon our never-dying souls. Shall it be, friends? Nay: listen once again to the pleading voice, "Turn ye, turn ye! why will ye die?" The good Lord make us to listen and yield to His love.

In the eighth chapter of Matthew (v. 34) we have recorded a terrible effect of the wonderful works of Jesus. While some were wishing to follow Him, others came to meet Him only to beseech Him to depart out of their coasts. *He took them at their word*. Can we conceive anything more sad? The gentle, loving Saviour bidden to depart from those whom He would have blessed; chased away from their coasts by their unbelief and hardness of heart! And is not their conduct repeated now? Do you think we surely are not guilty of this sin of rejecting Jesus? But are not too many of us thus speaking by actions, if not by words, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways; we had rather not be disturbed, we just wish to go on as we are." Perhaps we don't mean always to send

Him away, but just now we are not ready to listen. But what if He should take us at our word?

Do you remember His weeping over Jerusalem? Is it not a thought to touch our hearts that the Saviour was grieved enough by the rejection of the Jews to shed tears! He who is said never to have been seen to laugh (I think He must have smiled a winning smile at the little ones, when He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," and took them in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them, though He had no heart for the merriment of this world); *He* was seen at Lazarus' grave to weep for the sorrow brought into the world by sin, and in tender sympathy with His friends; *He* was seen to weep over this city of the dead,—dead souls;—to weep for the sorrow they were making for themselves, when they refused to yield Him their hearts' allegiance. He was grieved for His enemies as His loving heart breaks forth in the lament, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." Every word a sermon,—a funeral bell. Did any of those poor sinners against their own souls stop and think? Did those tears touch any heart with compunction? Did any feel a longing desire to comfort Him? Did any inquire, "What things?" "What day?" and thereupon yield to Him? If a little child sees us weep, its impulse is to wipe away the tears, to kiss them away, saying for sympathy, "I shall cry too." I heard of

such a hard old man saying he could not stand *that*, when touched by a lady's tears that would not be kept back when she saw him bent on making himself so miserable. I fear me the softening was but a passing effect, but his mention of it determined a young man to seek her out, that she might pray with him and lead him back to God. And can we read of the Saviour's tears unmoved? Can we go on in hardness and impenitence, "sinning away the day of grace," when we see that touching sight; and when we know not how long a time that exclamation, "If thou hadst known, *at least in this thy day,*" may cover, or how soon we may be called from earth?

"And does the Saviour weep
 Over His people's sin,
 Because we will not let Him keep
 The souls He died to win?
 Ye hearts that love the Lord,
 If at this sight ye burn,
 See that in thought, in deed, in word,
 Ye hate what made Him mourn."

How we deceive ourselves, waiting for louder calls, waiting for conviction. A messenger from the dead could say no more than is said in Scripture: "To the law and to the testimony; if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." The people of the Samaritan village, who would "not receive Jesus because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem," what they lost by forsaking their own mercy! What they lost by refusing to give Him

shelter for the night, who would willingly have given them all a shelter in His love! There were some though that "were waiting for Him" and "received Him gladly" in those days; there were some that besought Him to remain with them; there were some that "constrained Him, saying, Abide with us." Shall not the language of our hearts be this, "Oh, when wilt Thou come unto me?"

"*Now* is the constant ticking from the clock of time,
Now is the watchword of the wise, *now* is the banner of the prudent."

"Make haste, oh man, to live,
 Thy time is almost o'er;
 Oh, sleep not, dream not, but arise:
 The Judge is at the door.
 Make haste, oh man, to live!"

"How oft my guardian angel gently cried,
 'Soul, from thy casement look, and thou shalt see
 How He persists to knock and wait for thee!'
 And oh, how often to that voice of sorrow,
 'To-morrow we will open,' I replied,
 And when the morrow came, I answered still, 'To-morrow.'"

"Thus day and night they are pressing nigh,
 With tears and sighs, to the heavenly gate;
 Where the Watchman stands in His majesty,
 With a patience which never has said, 'Too late.'"

"Let the sorrowful children of want and sin
 Draw near to the gate, whence none depart;
 Let the nations arise and enter in,
 For the Lord is willing with all His heart."

XII.

ECHOES.

“How goes the fight with thee,—
The life-long battle with all evil things?”

“One life to live,—one death to die,—
And then one long eternity.
One life : oh, live that life to God !”

“WHEN said I, Ah, Lord God, they say of me,
Doth he not speak parables?” Even so still,
for “the natural man receiveth not the things
of God, for they are foolishness unto him.”

Walking across a common, one Sunday afternoon, I came upon a miserable scene. Hidden among the furze bushes were three or four men endeavouring to catch a rabbit. When I remonstrated, they said one of them had had nothing to eat all day, and he meant to have some supper: what did God make the wild animals for, if not to be eaten? and what would I do if I had nothing to eat? I was thus involved in a long chat; but the men were quite willing to talk, though unwilling to act upon the Bible word, “Seek first the kingdom of God,

and all these things shall be added unto you." It gave me an opportunity of repeating the Saviour's teaching: but not having trusted God with their souls they could not see how to trust Him for the supply of their bodily wants,—not believing that "there is no want to them that fear Him." When I reminded them of what God says, one of them said, "God doesn't speak now." But I assured them He does in His word, and in very truth to the hearts of those who love Him. He asked if God spoke to me? I told him I could hear His loving whispers, His gentle commands, and I wished they could hear His voice also.

Oh, that we were as attentive to it as we ought to be? "I will hear what God the Lord shall say," said one of old: "He will speak peace unto His saints, but *let them not turn again to folly.*" We forget that sometimes. "The ear of the soul must be close to the lip of God" if we are to hear Him speak; for Satan raises such a storm of unbelief sometimes that we can hardly hear the words, "It is I." And in the din of the world and the bustle of every-day life we are sometimes almost too distracted to hear the gentle warning, "This is the way: walk ye in it,"—when about to "turn to the right hand or to the left;" or the tender invitation, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." Have you listened for His voice? Have you ever said, "The companions hear Thy voice: cause me to hear it"?

If we want to hear His voice we must *study* His

Word, and be often speaking to Him in prayer. What do we know about *ploughing into our Bibles on our knees*, as Sarah Martin, taking up the words of an old divine, used to say she did? She was only a poor dressmaker, but she used her time and opportunities to take God's message to many a forlorn prisoner in gaol. A good man said, "We are often content to walk through the green pastures of the Word, satisfied that they are green pastures, but that is all." Is this so with us? Are we satisfied just to read a few verses of the Bible, or a chapter with our *eyes*, and think we have done our duty; or do we say, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"? There is a vast difference between walking through a field because it lies in our way, and making a *study* of that field, —stopping to admire and gather the sweet meadow flowers, and learn something of God's wonderful works in every varying bud and blade of grass; and yet more difference in lightly running over it, and in pausing to dig deep, because we have heard of a treasure concealed somewhere in that field, or because we know there is a treasure of fertility in the rich soil, if we will only be at the pains to turn it over. "It is seldom men ever discover the rich mine without some digging;" and thus it is with our Bibles. I daresay we all learnt the child's hymn,

"Holy Bible, Book divine,
Precious *treasure*, thou art mine."

And have we "searched" for the "hid treasure"?

I asked one who said he didn't read his Bible every day, Why not: did he think he knew it all? "No, indeed. If he studied it all his life he should never come to the end of it: but he hadn't time." Another who also said he didn't read God's Book, said he knew all about it; he had studied it often, and was quite satisfied he could learn no more. Both these required the help and teaching of God's Spirit that they might see things in their right light. The man who thought he should never come to the end of the Bible had a truer estimate of it than he who thought he knew all about it, for indeed the "commandment is *exceeding broad*:" "deep" indeed are His "counsels," and His "ways past finding out." It needs that we bring a very childlike teachable spirit to God's Word. He hides "these things from the wise and prudent" in their own eyes, and reveals them unto babes. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it," said the psalmist of old. Such a thought sometimes appals the natural indolence of the mind as to spiritual things; and because the work is difficult, and requires patient care and study, we put it from us; whereas the promise is to patient pains: "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine." There is the certainty of knowing "if we follow on to know the Lord." "My soul followeth *hard* after Thee;" and then we read, "They go from strength to strength: every one" who listens for God's voice, and runs the race "looking unto Jesus," depending on the grace

of the Holy Spirit, "every one of them appeareth before God in Zion."

One word, in passing, to anxious souls. "Do not look *back* too much, but look *on*. You will grow more upright by lifting up your head and gazing upward, than by lamenting over and looking at your crookedness; and the more your eyes are fixed on the Saviour's image, the more you will desire to become like Him, and learn your own unlikeness." A racer would never get to the end of his race if he were always looking back to see how far he had got on. Paul said, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before: I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We are indeed to remember the rock whence we were hewn and the hole of the pit whence we were digged (Is. li. 1), so that we be humble, and know that it is God only which stablisheth our goings; but it is not a profitable employment to be ever raking up past sins, when God says, "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee; thy sins and iniquities will I remember no more." If, as sometimes by a wave of Satan's temptations, or some sudden association, they rise up again to trouble us, so that we cry out almost in despair, "My sins have gone over my head, as a sore burden too heavy for me to bear," we must do with them again even as at the first,—carry them straight away to the cross of Christ, remembering that "the blood of Jesus Christ

cleanseth from all sin ;” and not attempt to bear the burden, or to get rid of it ourselves. The Psalmist was quite right when he said, “*too heavy for me to bear.*” “Looking into the soul we find all sorrow ; looking out to God we find all comfort and strength, life, and gladness of God.” Satan likes to keep a soul looking down. He cannot bear that we raise our eyes to look unto Jesus. But we must not let him tempt us thus. And “a saint, when overborne by indwelling sin, ought to comfort himself with the thought that a *prisoner of war* is not a *deserter* ;” and that “when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against him :” also that God promises, “I will strengthen them in the Lord ; and they shall walk up and down in His name.”

Did you ever notice how God treats us as reasonable beings, with powers to exercise in choosing and deciding about a matter put before us,—unreasonable, unreasoning, as we often are ? He says, “Come now and let us reason together.” He bears with us, and condescends to put the subject before us in so many ways ; if so, we may understand.

Such strange wrong thoughts we have about God and His ways ! “Thou thoughtest that I was even altogether such an one as thyself,” He says ; but these thoughts must be reprovèd. Truly our thoughts are not God’s thoughts. He must give us the mind of Christ ; we must yield ourselves to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, else we can never

understand or do the right. Augustine says, "I had never sought Thee if Thou hadst not found me; I had never followed Thee if Thou hadst not first loved me."

David, who had experienced the loving-kindness of the Lord, and had been taught some humbling lessons of his own weakness and God's restoring grace, said, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me." And in Jer. xxix. 11 we get a most comforting word. I well remember how once, when I was beginning to wish to love God, and yet looking more to self than to Christ was saddened by frequent failures, with what joy I read the verse, as my Bible seemed to open accidentally on the passage, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you; *thoughts of peace*, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." I find a few words copied from the life of a good Scotch minister, which I will put beside this. "On the words, 'I am poor and needy, yet the Lord *thinketh* upon me,' he observed, 'A thought from Jesus saved the dying thief; a thought from Him can make us happy in life, safe in death, and give us heaven at last. The voice of the Lord is powerful; so are His *thoughts*,—thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give (us) an expected end.'"

God often has to complain that the heart of the people is dull of feeling, and the ear heavy that it cannot hear. But for all that, is there never an echo waked up in your heart to break the dulness of silence that seems to have settled upon you?

What is an echo? Have you ever spoken to one? Of course you have. There is something attractive in the strange weird-like repetition of our words by an echo, that makes us desire to wake it, as we say.

There are many lovely pieces of solitude at which one wonders sometimes, as they seem almost wasted, so few people can admire them. We were talking over these one day when it was suggested that we might fancy them the resting places of the angels as they pass to and fro on their errands of ministry, where, after being saddened by a mission to a haunt of sin or suffering, they can refresh themselves with admiring God's beautiful works, which praise Him and are so expressive of His love toward His creatures. Such a nook is Cwm-Bychan. Many years ago, when we were staying in North Wales, we determined to make an excursion to this little hollow among the mountains, as its name signifies. We started early on a lovely autumn day, and after driving some miles left our car and the high road together, and having inquired our way at a little cottage, we set off to walk the two miles up the valley. By open fields we found our way to the narrow valley, passing a little lake, on the further side of which the mountains came down sheer and black into the water. Here we paused, having been told there was a beautiful echo which we must hear. Not always could we make it answer; so our Welshwoman guide undertook to show us how to speak to it, when it reproduced the most unearthly shrieks and wails at

her bidding. Then one of our party whistled some pretty airs, which were taken up again and again by the mountains, one after another, till the sound died away in the distance like an exquisite natural musical box. Again we pursued our way on and on, up a sort of giant's staircase. Some of the large blocks were rough and ill-shaped, while others were smoothed and rounded off like polished granite, but so regularly were the masses of stone placed that it seemed impossible to believe that nature had so laid them unaided by man. A little tinkling brook ran down the pass, and by it we rested to eat our lunch and admire the wildness of the scene. This pass led to another, Drws Ardudwy,—the pass or door of Ardudwy; and one could imagine the Ancient Britons contending the passes with their enemies as they were hemmed in among their mountains.

But it was thinking of the echo that made me recall the pleasant excursion of that autumn day so long ago. An echo is a very striking and beautiful thing, and has been made use of by designing people, in superstitious times, to impress others with a sense of their power. As is well known, it is produced by the voice or a sound striking a rock or wall, at a particular angle, from a certain distance. We could not wake that echo across the lake unless we stood in exactly the right position when we spoke to it, and then it replied clearly and distinctly.

Now it occurs to me that some circumstances are able to wake up an echo in our hearts, as the far

away voice wakes the echo from a wall or among the mountains. Sometimes we may waste all our breath to no purpose: there is no echo. We are too near; and then there is no clear response, only a great confusion of sounds among which we can distinguish nothing; or too far off, or not in the right direction. Now I want to wake an echo in your hearts, and to do it I must find the right position from which to throw my voice. I cannot touch another heart or make it respond unless my feet are on the Rock of Ages and my position is at the foot of the cross, while the breath of the Spirit wafts my voice across the intervening space, carrying the sound where it listeth. One day when I was reading to some people I knew, I came to the words, "I will arise and go to my Father." They woke an echo in one heart, as a man said, "That's out of the Testament, isn't it? I remember learning it when I was young." I think that parable of the prodigal son has perhaps waked more echoes in sinful human hearts than any other.

Have you never heard a text which has touched upon some place in your heart and awoke an echo? Perhaps it may have been uttered so close to your ear that the sound is all confusion and you can distinguish nothing, but as the great noise dies away a gentler echo comes. You have surely heard that before? There is something in your heart that responds to it; else why all this tumult, breaking the silence of your heart's repose? Long years ago a mother taught you that text, when you lisped

your baby prayers at her knee. A Sunday-school teacher pressed it home upon you, and you thought you would remember it, but you have forgotten it, till suddenly, perchance, a preacher speaking God's truth reminds you of it again; or God's own voice, by some sickness or accident to yourself or some friend, or by the near approach of death, wakes up an echo in your memory, and brings it all up again before you. Thank God if the echo have roused you to question before it dies away into silence, so that you may be ready to say, "Turn Thou me, and so shall I be turned," "So will we not go back from Thee, we will call upon Thy name," and, "When Thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek;" "Here am I, for Thou didst call me: speak, for Thy servant heareth."

We generally have to listen for an echo. We generally hush other sounds or we cannot detect its replies. A footfall echoes through an empty street in the silent night; a door shutting or a voice speaking, echoes again through the quiet of a deserted house, though we should not notice the sounds at other times. We were speaking but a little ago about the Mission in London. One object of that was to make a pause in our lives, so that in the quietness we might have the opportunity of hearing the "still small voice" of God's Spirit, and return answer back again. We ought to be thankful for anything that gives us a quiet time, for now-a-days we seem to live in a sad bustle. We so often say

we have "not a minute to spare,"—though this is constantly our own fault, because we have wasted some time instead of redeeming it,—and so we are running after a lost half-hour all the day, and often all our lives; this oppresses us with a sense of hurry, and in these days when many run to and fro and there is coming and going, and each year seems to fly faster than the last, there seems sometimes no leisure so much as to eat, and no time for sober reflection. This is just what Satan likes: he cannot bear to hear any one say, "I do remember my faults this day." So we ought to be thankful for anything that will make us stop and think. For God's complaint is, "No man layeth it to heart: none considereth in his heart." We ought to hail and make good use of our Sundays,—the weekly pause in the bustle, that might be so hallowed, which might be such a happy quiet time for getting close to God. But alas, how few of us use them as we should, or value them as we ought!

"Bless'd day of God,—how calm, how bright!

A day of joy and praise;

The labourer's rest, the saint's delight,—

The first and best of days.

"Oh, when the world with iron hand

Would bind me in its six days' chain,

Thus burst, oh Lord, the strong man's band,

And let my spirit loose again."

"Oh day most calm and bright,

The fruit of this, the next world's bud;

Th' indorsement of supreme delight,
 Writ by a Friend, and with His blood ;
 The couch of time,—care's balm and bay.
 The week were dark but for thy light :
 Thy torch doth show the way.

“Man had straight forward gone
 To endless death, but Thou dost pull
 And turn us round to look on One,
 Whom, if we were not very dull,
 We could not choose but look on still.”

Will you not from this time determine that your Sundays shall be to you what God meant them to be to us?—days of happy communion with Him,—foretastes of the rest of heaven,—days when “the door of heaven is open at its widest, when God's blessings are very plentiful. You will not find a Christian man's Sunday a gloomy day.” As George Herbert says again,—

“Thou art a day of mirth ;
 And where the week days trail on ground,
 Thy flight is higher, as thy birth.”

But the heart of stone responds not to the call of God. Listen to what Quarles says in his quaint old emblems:—

“Lord, as I *am*, I have no power at all
 To hear Thy voice, or echo to Thy call ;
 Give me the power to will, the will to do,
 Oh raise me up, and I will strive to go :
 Draw me, oh draw me, with thy treble twist,
 That have no power but merely to resist ;
 Oh lend me strength to do, and then command thy list !”

So when God says, "My son, give Me thine heart ; wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art my Guide?" do not say, "I can't." When you hear the word, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him ;" do not say, "I can't open my heart." God never told us to do a thing we *can't* do,—that is that He cannot enable us to do ; for as the old reformers said, "God's biddings are God's enablings," and if we do not resist the Spirit's workings He will enable us to open the door, and to submit ourselves to His gracious guiding and influences. He will enable us to yield our hearts' allegiance to its rightful King, working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. He will teach us to say,—

"Great ALL IN ALL, that art my rest, my home !
 My way is tedious and my steps are slow ;
 Reach forth Thy helpful hand, or bid me come :
 I am thy child ; oh, teach Thy child to go !"

"Oh Jesus, art Thou standing
 Outside the fast closed door,
 In lowly patience waiting
 To pass the threshold o'er?"

"Knocking ! knocking ! Still He's there ;
 Waiting ! waiting ! wondrous fair :
 But the door is hard to open,
 For the weeds and ivy-vine,
 With their dark and clinging tendrils,
 Ever round the hinges twine."

“Oh love, that passeth knowledge,
So patiently to wait !
Oh sin, that hath no equal,
So fast to bar the gate !

“Oh Jesus, Thou art pleading
In accents meek and low,—
‘I died for you, my children,
And will ye treat Me so ?’

“Oh Lord, with shame and sorrow,
We open now the door :
Dear Saviour, enter ! enter :
And leave us nevermore.”

The Saviour knocks at many a heart and is refused admittance. But never was a suppliant at mercy's gate refused. The direction is, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you ;” and many a poor travel-stained wanderer, venturing back with faltering steps and a fainting heart has proved it to be true. God has to say, “I called and ye refused ;” but it is written of Him, “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain,” “I will go and return unto my place till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face,” for “before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.”

Dear friend, are you wishing that you were sure that heaven would be open for you if you were to die at this moment ? Have you ever prayed with all your heart, at least you think so, and yet you see no sign of reply ; the heavens seem as brass, the door seems fast closed, you think your voice cannot penetrate the ear of God ? If you have come with

that all-prevailing name of Jesus, your prayer is heard, though you may think it is not. God is listening to it: He can hear the low breathing as well as the loudest cry. All your desire is known to Him, and your groaning is not hid from Him, and if He seems not to answer, it is only to make you go on praying. You remember there was once a poor woman who came to Jesus with a petition for her daughter's deliverance from grievous sickness, "but He answered her not a word." It did not seem like Him, not like His usually loving tender dealing and ready response to those who came asking favours; but though it seemed hard, it just roused her all the more to go on entreating, and in the end she got a double blessing in the Saviour's commendation of her faith: "Oh woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

So remember there is no want of love in the heart of God toward you; there is no fear that you will not be heard if you cry to Him *now*. There is no fear that the door of heaven will be closed against you, if you are clothed in the beautiful robes of the Saviour's righteousness. There is no fear that there will not be room for you there, *if you apply at once* to be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." He says, "Yet for this will I be inquired of;" He says, "Ye ask and have not, because ye ask amiss;" He says, "Ask, and ye shall receive," "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father

give the Holy Spirit"—and all the good things laid up in Christ Jesus, "treasures of wisdom and knowledge," "unsearchable riches,"—"to them that ask Him?" So take the resolution of the poor man, "I will knock again;" and remember that "men ought always to pray and not to faint," and you shall presently know that the door has been open all the time,—it was only that your sight was dim and defective, so that you could not see it; and that God has been waiting to be gracious all the time.

"Yet there is room! The Lamb's bright hall of song,
With its fair glory beckons thee along:
Room, room: still room! Oh, enter: enter now!

"Day is declining, and the sun is low;
The shadows lengthen, light makes haste to go:
Room, room: still room! Oh, enter: enter now!

"The bridal hall is filling for the feast;
Pass in! pass in, and be the Bridegroom's guest:
Room, room: still room! Oh, enter: enter now!

"It fills, it fills,—that hall of Jubilee!
Make haste, make haste,—'tis *not* too full for thee:
Room, room: still room! Oh, enter: enter now!

"Yet there is room! Still open stands the gate,—
The gate of love; it is not yet too late!
Room, room: still room! Oh, enter: enter now!

"Pass in, pass in! The banquet is for Thee;
That cup of everlasting love is free!
Room, room: still room! Oh, enter: enter now!

"All heaven is there, all joy! Go in: go in!
The angels beckon thee the prize to win:
Room, room: still room! Oh, enter: enter now!

“Louder and sweeter sounds the loving call !
Come, lingerer, come ; enter that festal hall :
Room, room : still room ! Oh, enter : enter now !

“Ere night that gate may close, and seal thy doom :
Then the last, low, long cry,—‘ No room, no room !’
No room : no room ! Oh, woful cry : ‘ No room !’”

You have heard these things often. I myself have told you them often : but as the word is, “Line upon line, precept upon precept,—here a little and there a little,” I tell them again and yet again ; hoping that ere the echoes of my voice die away you may say, “Lord, I believe : I know Thou hast said, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’”

“Hark : hark, my soul ! Angelic songs are swelling
O'er earth's green fields, and ocean's wave-beat shore ;
How sweet the truth those blessèd strains are telling
Of that new life when sin shall be no more.

“Onward we go, for still we hear them singing,—
‘Come weary souls, for Jesus bids you come ;’
And through the dark, its echoes sweetly ringing,
The music of the Gospel leads us home.

“Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea ;
And laden souls by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee.”


XIII.

PARABLES AND MIZPAH.

“How to begin, how to accomplish best
His end of being on earth and mission high.”

“Faint not, O man !
Follow the Master through the noble strife ;
Pursue His footsteps till they end in life :
Be strong in Him.

“With His reward
He comes : He tarries not,—His day is near.
When men least look for Him will He be here :
Prepare for Him.”

NE of our Bishops was having a little service with some railway-men in their dinner hour, when one of them, rather inclined to interrupt, called out to inquire a short cut to heaven. “Turn to the right, and keep straight forward,” was the ready reply ; after which the man had nothing more to say. He had got his sermon in those few words : the laugh was turned against himself, and the others were left to listen quietly. Ah, dear friends, don't a great many of us turn to the *left*, and

keep straight forward? as Solomon says, going straightway, unwittingly it may be, "as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through the liver: as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." By a crooked course, perchance,—even as when we walk in a fog, or over a bog, the constant stopping to think where we are, or to jump over this or that obstacle on to a firmer footing, bewilders us so that we fairly lose our way, and yet are going on perhaps to a deeper morass, or to a precipice which may prove fatal. You have often said, "That's right enough," when I have reminded you how foolish you would think any one wandering along a strange road, knowing the name of the place he wished to reach, but not having an idea how to get there, who, yet, when a finger-post pointed out the way, were deliberately to say, "But I'll try the other road, and see if that won't take me there as well." Could any one be so foolish? Yet is it not done? oh, so often! You think you would like to go to heaven, but you don't like the look of the road. The finger-post of Scripture points clearly, "This is the way: walk ye in it;" and shows that you must "Turn to the right, and keep straight forward;" but you think the road looks dull and narrow: you do not see any beauty in it. The road to the left looks far more inviting you think. You will try it for a little: *perhaps* it will make a bend and turn round into the other road. There are beauties though in the narrow way,

though you can't see them by just a glance when you have made up your mind they are not there. There may be rough places: it may be narrow sometimes; but there are green pastures, there are still waters in those "ways of pleasantness," in those "paths of peace." "Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids straight before thee," and you will see Jesus. And looking unto Him, you may run with patience the race that is set before you. "Turn to the right, and keep straight forward." "So run that ye may obtain."

You remember St. Paul's description of his going straight forward: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." (1 Cor. ix. 24—27.) "This *one* thing I do," not even looking back to see how well or how far he had got on, but reaching forward, pressing "toward the mark." (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) The poet Longfellow has set this out in a little parable poem called "Excelsior." This has been set to music, and was sung on one occasion, when any who wished for a quiet hour instead of mixing with the terrible noise and temptation of a Whit-Monday holiday were invited to come to a room provided for them. The poet figures a youth carrying a banner, on which was seen the word "Excelsior!" bent on performing a duty journey, and turning a deaf ear to all suggestions of danger or difficulty, all persuasions to rest on a dark, cold, stormy night,—ever crying,

Higher! Excelsior! I mean to excel: I mean to attain my end! and through all he steadily pursued his way till he was found in death,—

“Still grasping in his hand of ice
His banner with the the strange device—
Excelsior.”

There were but few who accepted the invitation that Whit-Monday evening, but it was felt that each one there counted like ten for their resolution in coming; and they were all pleased and interested. One man who had been a soldier expressed himself particularly satisfied at hearing this song,—he had so often wondered what Excelsior meant: so now it was hoped he would take it for his motto. My friends, shall we do so, looking steadily to the end, crying, “Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not;” going straight forward in spite of the temptations to turn aside,—in spite of difficulties in the way, in spite of the mocking laugh of those around: ever unfurling our banner, and letting our life speak for itself that we shall be satisfied with nothing less than this Excelsior!

You remember that verse where God says, “Is not my word like a hammer?” Now if we think over a few different kinds of hammers we shall see *how* it is like, and also how much depends on the way in which the hammer is used. A hammer breaks the flinty rock, or drives in the nails; and you know well that it often takes a good many strokes,—aye,

and sharp ones too,—to drive a nail *home*. Perhaps there is a knot in the wood, or may be beyond the wood there is a piece of stone, which may turn the nail aside, or cause it to bend. The wedges that are put in to split wood, or to make all tight, require many a judicious little tap to fix them in their place. I used to say it was my work to slip in the thin end of the wedge with a cheery word, and next time I came by I should hope to be able to put a bigger one in ; and you know sometimes how I was disappointed to find my wedges out, and the work to be done over again. Perhaps you have seen that wonderful steam-hammer invented by Nasmith, so powerful in its working, that will come down with a thundering crash, splitting neatly asunder a mass of wood, a bar of iron, or a block of stone ; or can be so adjusted and regulated as to come down so gently that it will crack a nut without injuring the kernel. Perhaps you have seen a gold-beater at his work, using his hammer so well that the little inch of gold-leaf is beaten out to cover many square yards. And doubtless we have all watched the blacksmith at his work,—

“The children coming home from school
Look in at the open door :
They love to see the flaming forge
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from the threshing floor.”

The celebrated musician Handel is said to have taken refuge in a blacksmith's forge one day during

a heavy shower, and while he watched the man at work, the strokes and the answering ring of the glowing iron he was shaping on the anvil formed themselves into a rhythm to the sensitive ears of the musician, and sang a song without words, which he has put down for us in the little piece called the "Harmonious Blacksmith." The smith knows he must seize the right moment, and strike while the iron is hot. It were to expend his strength in vain to hammer the cold iron. And I think too we may even mention the hammers in a piano. Carefully shaped and padded they are, and answering to the lightest touch of the finger on the keys, they strike the unseen chords and produce sweet, rousing, or soothing sounds.

With any one of these hammers an unskilled, unskilful hand, will fail to produce the desired effect. You have seen a little child petitioning to be allowed to do something,—say with a hammer in its hand desiring earnestly to drive a nail, pleading, "Let me do it," while his older friend stands by and replies, "Yes, you shall: but I must hold your hand, and we will do it together." And sometimes, through the child's eagerness, the work seems almost spoiled; yet does the father tenderly manage so that the strokes shall be planted in the right place, and the inefficient ones not do much damage. So is it with us. Our Father must hold our hand, or the strokes from the hammer of His Word will not *tell*. But if we say, Show me how to do it,—hold my hand; and

are not in too great a hurry to spoil His work by our impatience, we shall find that He allows us the great privilege of working with and for Him, and that He will guide us where to plant the stroke which shall do His work and bring Him glory. So have I asked Him to do with and by me, that these repeated strokes may *tell* for Him, and by His grace the nail may be driven *home*, the wedges surely fixed, that sweet sounds of praise be drawn forth to His honour and glory.

I could go on talking to you for a long time, but I must not now say much more. But once again I ask you to consider the mission of the Lord Jesus, the sent One, and say whether you can rejoice in it; whether the knowledge of it has brought a peace and quietness into your souls such as you could not conceive before; whether you have proved "the work of righteousness" to be "peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." I want you each one to ask yourself whether you have submitted yourself to the righteousness of God, knowing that you yourself can never meet the righteous laws' demands, and that if you are to pay the debt you owe to God there is no hope for you, as you have "nothing to pay;" and whether, taught by God's Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus has satisfied every claim, you have joyfully committed yourself to Him, saying, "Thou shalt answer for me. Be Thou surety for Thy servant for good," with Paul's assurance: "I know whom I have believed, and am

persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

Can you sing—

"The Son of God is there;
The Holy One is hanging on that tree.
He took on Him, in love, my sins, and bore them all:
The just for the unjust has paid the penalty.

"My Surety hangeth there:
My Substitute, who gave His life for mine;
Who died my death that I should live; transferring all
My guilt to Him, to me His excellence Divine.

"He died my awful death;
Therefore I know that I shall never die;
And from that death divine, to me flows righteous love,—
The love that cannot change, the love of God most high.

"The cross,—it suits me well:
It soothes my fears, and speaks true words of peace;
It breaks my bonds in twain, and liberates my soul;
It healeth all my wounds, and bids my sorrows cease.

"It gives me heavenly strength,
And in that strength I fight the fight of God:
It draws me on; it lifts me up from sin and dust;
It lightens all my path and shows the heavenly road:

"It giveth peace with God!
It gives the peace of God that passeth thought;
It shows the Christ of God, Himself our only peace,—
The sure and perfect peace, which the world knoweth not."

Is it so? or are you still all abroad, tossed hither and thither, driven of every wind, the sport of every temptation, still unblessed?

Oh, if you but knew the joy of seeking Jesus, the joy of finding Jesus, the joy of living for Jesus, the

joy of knowing certainly that you are going to be with Jesus for ever!

“‘Keep close to God,’ was the counsel of a dying saint to two young men. If we do that we know our eternity will be brighter and better than it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive; for it is written, ‘Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.’ The Lord Jesus says, ‘Where I am *there* shall also my servant be;’ and we are told that ‘His servants shall serve Him: they shall see His face and go no more out’ from the glory and the joy.

“But sin separates us from God, so before we can keep close to Him we, ‘who sometimes were far off,’ must have the sin taken away, and the love of it crushed out of our hearts by ‘the expulsive power’ of ‘the love of God shed abroad’ there by the Holy Spirit: we must be ‘made nigh by the blood of Christ.’ ‘A people near unto Him’ is a holy and truly happy people. Let our cry then be, ‘Draw me: we will run after Thee;’ and we shall hear Him saying to us, ‘Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’

“‘Keep close to God.’ Let us take this as our watchword; and when Satan tempts us to a little sin, let us remember that a *little sin* may separate us a long way from God; for if Satan can get in the thin end of the wedge we may be sure he will not stop with that. So let us be well on our guard.

“We know not what is before us; but this we know,—that if the Lord is on our side we need fear nothing. If we can certainly depend on our guide we need not mind, though the way be dark or the road rough.”*

We often get a little parable in the things that happen around us, if we only knew the key to it. The coast of Cornwall is very interesting, with its wild rocks and deep bays, and curious caverns and beautiful coloured sand and cliffs. One day we made an excursion to see some of these curious things on the northern coast, and after a pretty drive through woods and country scenes, found ourselves near Bedruthan sands. The shore there is studded with rocks of the most fantastic shape, and deeply indented with little bays.

Our guide let us wander about, exploring the different objects of interest, till we noticed that the tide was rising very rapidly, and saw that it was time to go back if we wished to reach the top of the cliff without risk of being caught. But we were even then too late, for as we attempted to go round a mass of rock stretching far out to sea, which had been well inland as we had passed it shortly before, we found the water was already beating against it, and our retreat was cut off. But the guide had allowed us to get into this little difficulty to give us a surprise, and we heard his warning voice some way

* “Will your's be a happy new year?”—*Caswell*.

up the cliff calling us to follow. Above him we perceived quite a small hole, into which the foremost of our party were disappearing. Some of us thought we could never climb up to it, and could never venture through that small aperture; but he assured us there was no other way, as the tide was by this time well up over the path we had come. So there was nothing for it but to trust ourselves entirely to him, to take his hand, and bow our head at his bidding. And when we had scrambled into the hole we found we were in a narrow uneven passage through the rock, just high enough to allow us to walk upright, and presently we were out of the gloom in a charming little bay, well out of the way of the advancing tide, where we could rest at our leisure. We did not know of that pleasant termination to the rough gloomy passage; but the guide did, and he was but teaching us to trust though we cannot see a reason why.

Another time we were in Switzerland. We had passed the night at the far end of a beautiful valley in order to be ready for a very early start over the Gemmi. Very lovely everything looked in the fresh morning air, as we wended our way up and up through luxuriant woods, attracted now by the large sort of grasshoppers,—looking like butterflies with their various coloured wings, blue, green, and scarlet,—now by the sweet flowers bathed in dew. But after a time we left the woods below us, and as the sun got high enough we began to feel the warmth of his

beams very oppressive, even though the breeze blew chill now and then, and under a block of rock or a stone we would find a piece of ice. At last we became very tired, and wished much, and vainly as it seemed, for shelter.

We were going across a sort of open plain exposed to the scorching glare of the midday sun, when we spied a little before us a huge mass of rock throwing a most grateful shade over a patch of the heated earth. The words, "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land" rose to my lips, as we thankfully availed ourselves of the refreshment for a short time, before pursuing our way, which soon led us down on the other side of the mountains by such a steep zig-zag path that, on looking back at the perpendicular wall of rock, it seemed impossible to believe we really had found our way to the valley by that only way.

The guide's re-assuring voice, and that grateful shade, were just what we wanted in the different circumstances of those summer-day excursions. And so God's people know that they never can be, in any circumstances, unforeseen and unprovided for by Him to whom they can look up joyfully and say, "This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide unto death. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory."

"Let us be patient. God is love ;
All wrong shall yet be righted here :
The bitterest shall the sweetest prove,
The dark and tangled shall be clear.

“The worst shall then appear the best,
 And from confusion order spring ;
 The wisdom then shall stand confessed,
 And power, of the eternal King.

“Trust Him ! He knows our troubled state ;
He knows each winding of the road :
 Let us sit calmly down and wait :
 ‘ Be still, and know that I am God.’ ”

Think also of the “ word in season to him that is weary,” spoken again and again by Him who was sent “ to comfort all that mourn, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to preach the Gospel to the poor.” Think of Him living amongst the poor, and therefore knowing by experience all their troubles. He might have come as a King’s Son lapped in velvet and luxury ; but He came as the poor man’s child,—“ the carpenter’s Son,”—and saying of Himself, “ The Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” Think of all He did and suffered, and hear His gentle entreaty : “ Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “ He pleased not Himself ;” but He says, with reference to His Father’s will, “ I do always such things as please Him ;” and He turns to us, and we may fancy we hear Him saying, “ All this I did for thee : what art thou doing for Me ? ”

He asks you to give Him yourself, thereby showing that you believe and love Him, and accept His work for you, and rest upon it to your soul’s comfort ; and

then out of a full heart you will be ready to say,
 "Come and hear: I will declare what God hath done
 for my soul."

"There was One who once gave freely,
 For His bounteous all He gave;
 And in giving He hath taught us
 How to give, and love, and save."

Jesus meant us all to work for Him as it lies in
 our power.

"The time is short!
 If thou wouldst work for God, it must be now;
 If thou wouldst win the garland for thy brow,
 Redeem the time,

"Life ebbs apace!
 Fast crumbles down this mortal house of clay;
 Fling not, like dust, thy precious hours away:
 The end is near!"

Paul says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God;" but it is not only those who are set apart for the service of the sanctuary who may take up work for Jesus. In the preparation of the Tabernacle the work of all the "willing-hearted," men or women, was accepted. In Nehemiah's time the women helped as they could in the work of restoring the waste places and building the walls of the city and temple. In the New Testament we have greetings to women who "laboured much in the Lord." And all through the Bible we find that small service is

accounted "true service," if done from the motive of love to God, and is accepted accordingly. The little Israelitish maid in Naaman's household had truly her mission. And many another, "faithful but not famous," who were included in the Saviour's thought, "As thou hast sent Me into the world so have I also sent them into the world," whose names may not be in the court rolls of earth as having accomplished some splendid work, but "whose names are in the book of life."

Long ago the people of Israel answered Moses, "All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go." And we take our commission from Him of whom Moses said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear." When the prophet Isaiah heard the voice from the excellent glory, "Whom shall I send?" he was ready with the reply, "Here am I: send me!" but it was because upon his cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips,"—he had received the assurance of pardon and cleansing, an angel having laid a live coal from off the altar on his mouth, saying, "Lo this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged."

Truly there are men of mission-lives still, not only among God's ordained ministers, but among yourselves. Men who have listened for the Lord's voice

calling them from sin and self to Himself, and who, constrained by the love of Christ, live no longer to themselves, but unto Him which died for them. Men who, having answered the question, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" by another, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" are going on quietly with their daily work, striving in all things to adorn the doctrine of their Lord and Saviour, and so living that those they mix with can plainly take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. Men who act out the lines—

"Wherever in the world I am,
 In whatsoever estate,
 I have a fellowship with hearts
 To keep and cultivate;
 And a work of lowly love to do
 For the Lord, on whom I wait."

And so just by word, if possible, or if not by life, try to serve God and win others to that blessed service. Men "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," which "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" not ashamed "to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to fight manfully under His banner against sin, the flesh and the devil;" men acting on the monition, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," and desiring simply to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," regardless of all that *whatsoever* and *whithersoever* may involve that is trying to the flesh and spirit, only intent on pleasing the Lord. "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou

goest," said one who was attracted by the Saviour's teaching and gracious presence: blessed indeed if we can sincerely say this!

The other day I saw Elisha called "the man who had made up his mind." If you look at 1 Kings xix. 19, you will see he said to the Prophet Elijah very much what this man said to our Lord; but while this man seems to have failed, Elisha went on steadily to the end. Elijah tested him, as our Lord tested those who came to Him, and his resolution bore the test. Religion is not intended to make us forgetful of the duties of our home; but where they seem to clash, God's counsel must be asked and heeded, and His plain directions obeyed. Elisha returned to give up his ploughing, to say farewell to his parents, and to have a final love-feast of thanksgiving to God; and "then he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him," till he was taken up into heaven. And by his determination to follow and be with him to the end, he saw the glorious sight of the chariot and horses of fire which came to bear Elijah away, and exclaiming, "My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," took up the mantle of Elijah which had fallen from him, and went forth in the spirit and power of his master, to follow and emulate his mighty works. My friends, can our resolutions bear testing, or does a difficulty daunt us?

This following Jesus is a mark of the sheep of the Good Shepherd, who "goeth before His sheep and

they follow Him." That word *whithersoever* may imply a great deal that is hard to flesh and blood to bear, but those who are whole-hearted prefer to keep close to Him as it is weary work following "afar off." But too often the murmur comes, "Suffer me first to do this or that, then I will give up all and make the pursuit of holiness my one object and my Father's work my one occupation." The heart is somewhat touched, we think we are in earnest to win heaven and work for Jesus; but we are more like this man, putting something between us and the carrying out of our good resolutions, than like Matthew, called in the midst of his business, who didn't allow his gold or his gains to hinder him, but left it all that moment to follow Jesus.

Intent on pleasing the Lord. I have known such, thank God, among you working-men, whose "life of daily toil, or suffering, is ennobled by the King's mark on it, as they sing—

“ ‘ I will not work my soul to save,
For that my Lord has done ;
But I will work like any slave
For love of God's dear Son.’

“The covenant of works began with service and ended with reward. The covenant of grace begins with mercy and ends with service, and most certainly a service not short of the former.”

Dear friends, be not “discouraged because of the way,” but follow David's example and encourage yourselves in God knowing that “our mission is to

hear the words of the Lord Jesus and to go where He sends us,—to go into the world as His messengers from day to day. So may He teach us to go about our daily business as men sent by the Lord Jesus, until He calls us to return to Him." Those around may not understand us, neither did they understand our Master when He was on earth. Only lately, when I was speaking for my Master, a man said to me, "You're paid for this." I did not quite make out his meaning at first, so he said again, "You are doing this for remuneration." My first impulse was smilingly to assure him he was mistaken; but I told him if I could only have the satisfaction of knowing that I had been allowed to take God's message to him for his soul's good, *that* would be ample payment; and I opened my Bible to show him a text which had sent me out happily shortly before: "Be strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded." (2 Chron xv. 7.) A good man said, "He has given me wages *with* my work, and wages *in* my work: all I am, all I have, I owe to Him. I can endorse the declaration of one of my forefathers, 'There is no master so kind as Christ, no service so pleasant and so profitable as His; no reward so fully satisfying and permanent as His.'"

"Hark, the voice of Jesus crying,
'Who will go and work to-day?
Fields are white and harvest waiting,
Who will bear the sheaves away?'

Loud and strong the Master calleth,
 Rich reward He offers thee ;
 Who will answer, gladly saying,
 'Here am I : send me, send me' ?

" If you cannot cross the ocean,
 And the heathen lands explore,
 You will find the heathen nearer ;
 You can help them at your door.
 If you cannot give your thousands,
 You can give the widow's mite ;
 And the least you give for Jesus,
 Will be precious in His sight.

" Let none hear you idly saying,
 'There is nothing I can do,'
 While the souls of men are dying,
 And the Master calls for you.
 Take the task He gives you gladly,
 Let His work your pleasure be ;
 Answer quickly when He calleth,
 'Here am I : send me, send me !'"

The commission was given long ago, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." If we may not follow this out *literally*, we may each in our own measure, if we love and desire to honour Him who spoke the words. Do we feel in our own happy experience that His kingdom is set up in our hearts we shall be earnest in joining in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ;" we shall pray much that the message taken forth by Missionaries, who often go with their lives in their hands to foreign lands, may have free course and be glorified, and we shall try

to help on the work by interesting others in it, and by giving as we can.

I know some may feel that the giving is an impossibility for them, with low wages and high prices; but God will set that straight, if in honesty of purpose we ask Him to show us what to do.

“If the heart is full of love to Jesus and the desire to do something for Him who has done so much for us, the feeling will find some way of expression. The good Samaritan gave of his time and sympathy to the poor wounded man left half dead and desolate by the highway side. (Luke x. 30.) And our Lord speaks of the acceptableness in His sight of even ‘a cup of cold water,’ if given in a right spirit of love to Himself. The poor man may say, ‘How can I be expected to give money to the Missionary Society? It takes all my time to work for my living, all my money to keep home together.’ I know it: and yet when I read of ‘a certain poor widow’ who cast into the Lord’s treasury ‘two mites, which make a farthing,’ out ‘of her penury’ casting ‘in all the living that she had,’ and find that for doing so she was commended by Him who knows the secret motive which urges the outward act, I can see that there is a way for the poorest to help on God’s work. If there ‘be first a willing mind’ the offering is ‘accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.’ When I read ‘out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou perfected praise,’ I see there must be a way in which

the weakest and feeblest among us can do something to glorify the Father which is in heaven, by showing forth His praise, not only with the lips but in the apparently insignificant actions of daily life.

“Sometimes we are encouraged to try to do something in our small sphere, with our small means, by hearing of what others have done, and how the little self-denial has proved a gain in showing we can do without something we had thought necessary. ‘There is that scattereth and yet increaseth;’ ‘He that watereth others shall himself be watered.’ And in the path of self-denial this is abundantly proved true. To encourage some who may be sighing over inability to give anything towards forwarding God’s work, I will mention two instances which have come under my own notice, though the actors have possibly as little knowledge of it, or desire to be commended for their acts of self-denial, as the poor widow mentioned in the Gospel.

“Some children in the country, surrounded with comfort, having been interested in the sad story of ‘The Little Matchbox-makers,’ agreed to spare some of their pocket-money in order to help towards giving dinners to these poor famishing children in the East-end of London; and besides this to give up marmalade at breakfast for some months, on being promised that the money usually spent on it should be added to the sum they could otherwise save: this being quite an act of self-denial, as they were all particularly fond of marmalade.

“A working man’s heart was touched by God’s grace, and he began to consider how he could make known to others the glad news which, being received into his heart, had made all the difference in his life. The cause of the heathen perishing for lack of knowledge was much before him, and he desired to help the Church Missionary Society. But how? He certainly could not spare much money: and then he wanted to be sure that what he could spare actually found its way into the channel he intended. He feared to put it into the boxes at the church doors, as their contents were taken for a different object each Sunday. He confided his difficulty to the lady in whose district he lived, and who collected for the Society, and she helped him out of it by promising to take care of what he could spare. And how much do you think it was? *Twopence a week!* And how could he manage to spare twopence a week think you? He turned the matter over in his mind, and he saw one way of making some money by an act of self-denial. He was accustomed to spend fourpence a week on tobacco, and *he determined to put his pipe on half rations*, and give the twopence thus saved to sending the good news of Christ’s salvation to the poor heathen who knew it not. Perhaps he felt as one said, ‘My pipe is my only little bit of comfort;’ but he was learning a better comfort, and I should not be at all surprised to hear that the pipe was broken and the whole fourpence dedicated to another than self.

“‘Go thou and do likewise.’ We don’t all have marmalade for breakfast, and we don’t all smoke ; and yet is there not some little indulgence we can forego for the sake of Him who so loved us as to lay aside His glory, and living a self-denying life as man on earth, was content to die upon the cross for us, ‘the just for the unjust,’ that He might bring us to God, ‘who though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich’? He says, ‘If any man serve Me let him follow Me.’ So is there not some marmalade we can give up? Is there not some pipe we can put on short commons, or break altogether?

“And if we really cannot help thus, at least we can pray, at least we can ask Him to teach us and help us by the power of the Holy Spirit to ‘be blameless and harmless: the sons of God without rebuke; followers of God as dear children, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the Word of life,’ that our light shining before men they may see our good works, our humble endeavours, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.” So I have copied part of a little paper, “The Pipe put on Half Rations,” to encourage others; and at least we may all remember the Saviour’s words, “Go home to thy friends, and tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

And now I must draw to a close, and I am going to put that last which ought perhaps to have come

first. A book must have a title, you know, and I have been a little puzzled what to call this. I thought of a word we find in Genesis, which should be a happy reminder to us to live our lives for God. We all remember the story of Jacob and Laban, and how after a long sojourn in "the land of the people of the East," God said to Jacob, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and I will be with thee." (Gen. xxxi. 3.) So without telling Laban of his intention, he started on his journey, with his family and his flocks and herds, back to the land he had left so many years before, a solitary fugitive. Laban "pursued after him seven days' journey," and chode him for leaving thus; and after a little discussion they made a covenant, and a stone was set up for a pillar, and they made a heap of stones and called it the heap of witness, "and Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." (v. 49.) But when I had made up my mind to send out my message as "Mizpah," I found there was already a book so called, so I had to find another title. However, I give you the word still; for if we are thinking that the Lord is watching over us, and watching between us when we are absent one from another, it will help us in our passage through the world. To feel that we are doing all our work under the Master's eye, and that we may look forward to a joyful meeting in the city of God when our working day here is over, will give us a spring in our work, even when

we feel weary by reason of the burden and heat of the day.

“And it is sweet to do a little thing
For Him who loves me so.”

Dear friends, let us stir each other up to be in earnest in our determination that nothing shall come between us and that glorious home, into which nothing that defileth can enter, where the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be, and His servants shall serve Him.

Remember there is

“Only one way !

One way for all the many wanderers,
Returning from a thousand various parts,
Through earth's long stormy years.

“Only one city !

And to that city His beloved come ;
Brought by himself, to find in it for ever
Their safe and blessed home.

“Only one Christ !

And to that Christ the Father draws each eye,
Bidding them look, and in that looking live,
That they no more may die.

“Only one heaven !

Into whose glory He His own doth call ;
Where all is sinless, sorrowless, and bright,—
Where Christ is all in all,”

and that if we are to get there it must be “led by the Spirit:” taught by that blessed Spirit to say, “Abba Father, Thou art all my salvation and all my desire.”

—Lord, in Thy glorious light
 Let us see light, and in Thy tender love,
 Oh, lead us safely to Thy home above !

No night, no curse, no moon nor setting sun :
 What will it be when glory 's once begun !
 What will it be the golden streets to pace
 And all the love of bye-gone years to trace,
 And in the glad new song our voices raise
 To swell the chorus to Emmanuel's praise !

“ Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

“ Grace be with you all. Amen.”

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the 1990s, the number of people who are employed in the service sector has increased in all countries.

There are several reasons for this. First, the service sector has become more important in the economy. Second, the service sector has become more important in the labour market. Third, the service sector has become more important in the social structure. Fourth, the service sector has become more important in the culture. Fifth, the service sector has become more important in the environment. Sixth, the service sector has become more important in the politics. Seventh, the service sector has become more important in the education. Eighth, the service sector has become more important in the health care. Ninth, the service sector has become more important in the housing. Tenth, the service sector has become more important in the transportation. Eleventh, the service sector has become more important in the communication. Twelfth, the service sector has become more important in the recreation. Thirteenth, the service sector has become more important in the security. Fourteenth, the service sector has become more important in the energy. Fifteenth, the service sector has become more important in the information. Sixteenth, the service sector has become more important in the science. Seventeenth, the service sector has become more important in the technology. Eighteenth, the service sector has become more important in the innovation. Nineteenth, the service sector has become more important in the research. Twentieth, the service sector has become more important in the development.

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